Aquinas's Theology of Grace

Metaphysics and the New Perspective

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Preface

When I taught philosophical theology at the Pontifical Athenaeum *Regina Apostolorum* from 2007-2015, there were several theological themes that I wanted to study more deeply: the debate about the natural desire to see God; the relationship between the various types of human knowledge of God; the ultimate purpose of creation; and, how God moves irrational and rational creatures to their ultimate end. There were also several debated questions within Thomistic studies that I wanted to clarify: Was the potency to the act of the vision of God's essence a natural potency or an obediential potency? Was the desire to see God natural or elicited? Does God move the rational creature by premotion or by application? What role does grace play in the attaining of our ultimate end?

I saw a deep connection between the metaphysics of the Scholastic commentator tradition and their corresponding theology of grace. I began to wonder what Aquinas's theology of grace would look like if I employed Cornelio Fabro's approach to Thomistic metaphysics, which I expounded in my first doctorate.[1] I wondered if there was a connection between Fabro's approach to Aquinas's metaphysics and Henri de Lubac's approach to Aquinas's theology of grace and the supernatural.

When I proposed the project for the dissertation in 2015, there were two texts of Thomas Aquinas on grace that focused my initial investigation. The first was from *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 5, which reads: "by [grace] man is sufficiently ordered to eternal life."[2] The second text was from *Super Boethium De Trinitate*. It reads: "For even though man is naturally inclined to his ultimate end, he cannot attain it naturally but only by grace, and this on account of the eminence of that end."[3] Guided

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[1] J. MITCHELL, *Being and Participation: The Method and Structure of Metaphysical Reflection according to Cornelio Fabro*, APRA, Rome 2012.

[2] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 5: "gratia dicitur secundum quod per eam homo ordinatur in vitam aeternam sufficienter."

[3] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Super Boethium De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4 ad 5: "Quamvis enim homo naturaliter inclinetur in finem ultimum, non tamen potest naturaliter illum consequi, sed solum per gratiam, et hoc est propter eminentiam illius finis."

by these two texts, I thought that the key to resolving some of the debated points was to distinguish between a natural and insufficient ordering of the human being to the beatific vision by nature and a supernatural and sufficient ordering to the beatific vision by grace. I started to see that the Scholastic approach tended to deny that there can be a natural inclination or natural order or natural desire for something that cannot be attained by our natural powers.[4]

I was convinced that a proper understanding of the metaphysical notions that Aquinas employs in the theology of grace was of utmost importance. The proper understanding of the notions of order, inclination, desire, nature, being, and participation could help resolve some of the debated points concerning Aquinas's theology of grace.

I presented the results of my initial investigation at a 2016 conference at The Catholic University of America on Cornelio Fabro, where I expounded Fabro's thought on supernatural participation.[5] One of Fabro's insights from *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione* (1939) was that he was unconvinced that the distinction between virtual participation and formal participation, which he attributed to the Salamancan Carmelites and which was often used by Scholastic commentators, was correct. Fabro proposed instead that Aquinas distinguishes between univocal-predicamental participation and analogical-transcendental participation. Human participation in the divine nature is either an analogical-transcendental participation or a third type of participation, which Fabro called "touching by operation" (*attingere per operationem*). In light of Fabro's critique of the Scholastic division of participation as a possible deviation from Aquinas's authentic thought, I started to posit and see that there were other deviations.

As I was conducting my research, a major contribution to Aquinas's theology of grace was published in 2017: the two articles by Alain

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[4] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, Sapientia Press, Ave Maria 2010, p. 410.

[5] J. MITCHELL, "Cornelio Fabro on Supernatural Participations," in *Cornelio Fabro. Essential Thinker. Philosopher of Being and of Freedom*, Acts of the Fabro Symposium, Studia Fabriana. Vol. 1, ed. N. DREYER, IVE Press, Chillum 2017, pp. 89-115.

Contat in *Revue thomiste* on the natural desire to see God.[6] Contat discerned an evolving distinction between appetite and desire in Aquinas's thought. He discovered a text in Aquinas's mature thought on desire that characterizes it as "without (*absque*) the consideration of the possibility or impossibility" of attaining the desired absolute good.[7] Using this text as an interpretive key, Contat determined that the natural desire for the beatific vision formally belongs to the will as nature (*voluntas ut natura*). He also distinguished the way the intellect is naturally inclined to the beatific vision and the way the will naturally desires that the intellect attain its ultimate perfection, which consists in the vision of God's essence. While the natural desire is formally of the will, it is foundationally proper to the inclination of the intellect to its ultimate perfection. Contat concluded, against the Scholastic tradition, that the potency to the beatific vision is not an obediential potency and that the natural desire to see God follows as a property of human nature and is not reducible to a conditional desire consequent to and elicited by knowledge of God's existence.

I submitted my definitive project for the dissertation in June 2018. Over the next two years, I was able to finish three long chapters: first, the chapter on *De ueritate*, second, the chapter on the *Summa contra Gentiles*, and, third, the chapter on the *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*. What emerged from these three chapters is that Aquinas's thought evolved and developed notably on several points from the *Scriptum* to the *Summa contra Gentiles*. This confirmed that the principal way forward to resolving the debated points was a comprehensive, chronological, and contextualized reading of Aquinas's work. The Scholastic approach, I saw, tended to cite early texts from Aquinas that deny our natural desire to see God, used early texts to impose an interpretative framework on mature texts, and usually cited proof texts outside of their original context.

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[6] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre le désir naturel de voir Dieu selon saint Thomas d'Aquin (I)," *Revue thomiste* 117/3 (2017), pp. 397-416. "Une clef pour comprendre le désir naturel de voir Dieu selon saint Thomas d'Aquin (II)," *Revue thomiste* 117 (2017), pp. 531-568.

[7] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De uirtutibus (De spe)*, q. 4, a. 1: "desiderium est alicuius boni absolute, absque consideratione possibilitatis et impossibilitatis illius."

In my research, I found that in the *Scriptum* (1252-56), Aquinas does deny that a human being can have a natural desire for something they cannot naturally attain.[8] In the *De ueritate* (1256-59), Aquinas holds that for man to be ordered to the good of eternal life, we need some inchoation of supernatural knowledge.[9] It was only after the *Super Boethium De Trinitate* (1257-59), written most likely towards the end of the composition of the *De ueritate*, that Aquinas consistently affirms that we have a natural desire and inclination to the beatific vision. Now, in both the *Scriptum* and *De ueritate*, there are hints at Aquinas's mature solutions. It is notable that in both works, the difficult texts in question concern the necessity of the infused virtues. Although his *Scriptum* on Book III denies a natural desire for the vision of God's essence, his *Scriptum* on Book IV affirms that all human beings naturally desire their ultimate end and beatitude,[10] and that this beatitude essentially consists in the vision of God's essence.[11] At the same time, Aquinas's *Scriptum* posits that while we all naturally seek (*appetit*) beatitude, we do not all seek the divine vision.[12] In *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 2, Aquinas argues that grace proportions nature to the ultimate end and that the infused virtues proportion the soul's powers to the ultimate end and

[8] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In III Sent*., d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 ad 4: "Desiderium autem naturale non potest esse nisi rei quae naturaliter haberi potest; unde desiderium naturale summi boni inest nobis secundum naturam, inquantum summum bonum participabile est a nobis per effectus naturales."

[9] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ueritate*, q. 14, a. 2: "Unde oportet etiam quod ad hoc quod homo ordinetur in bonum vitae aeternae, quod quaedam inchoatio ipsius fiat in eo cui repromittitur."

[10] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In IV Sent*., d. 49, q. 1, a. 1, qa. 1: "beatitudo, cum sit naturaliter ab omnibus hominibus desiderata, nominat ultimum humanae vitae finem."

[11] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In IV Sent*., d. 49, q. 2, a. 4, *praeterea*: "in visione Dei consistit essentialiter hominis beatitudo."

[12] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In IV Sent*., d. 49, q. 1, a. 3, qa. 1 ad 2.

enable it to work to attain the end.[13] *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 5 clarifies that "to proportion" means "to order sufficiently."[14]

In the *Summa contra Gentiles* (1259-65), Aquinas argues in Book III that every intellectual substance tends by natural desire to the vision of God's substance.[15] Aquinas's *Compendium theologiae* (1265-67) teaches the same: "Therefore, our natural desire to know cannot come to rest within us until we know the first cause […] in its very essence."[16] The *prima pars* (1265-68) of the *Summa theologiae* is consistent with the *Summa contra Gentiles* and *Compendium theologiae*. He holds that to say that our beatitude consists in something other than the vision of God is opposed to faith and also against (*praeter*) reason.[17] In the *prima secundae* (1271) of the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas argues that our ultimate and perfect beatitude consists in the vision of the divine essence.[18] In this mature text, Aquinas finally deals with the interplay of intellect and will as regards our ultimate and perfect beatitude. He writes that if the intellect does not reach knowledge of the essence

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[13] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 2: "Unde oportet quod homini detur aliquid, non solum per quod operetur ad finem, vel per quod inclinetur eius appetitus in finem illum, sed per quod ipsa natura hominis elevetur ad quamdam dignitatem, secundum quam talis finis sit ei competens: et ad hoc datur gratia; ad inclinandum autem affectum in hunc finem datur caritas; ad exequendum autem opera quibus praedictus finis acquiritur, dantur aliae virtutes."

[14] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 5: "gratia dicitur secundum quod per eam homo ordinatur in vitam aeternam sufficienter."

[15] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 62: "omnis substantia intellectualis naturali desiderio tendit ad illam visionem."

[16] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Compendium theologiae*, I, ch. 103: "Non igitur naturale sciendi desiderium potest quietari in nobis quousque primam causam cognoscamus, non quocumque modo sed per eius essentiam."

[17] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 12, a. 1: "Cum enim ultima hominis beatitudo in altissima eius operatione consistat, quae est operatio intellectus, si nunquam essentiam Dei videre potest intellectus creatus, vel nunquam beatitudinem obtinebit, vel in alio eius beatitudo consistet quam in Deo. Quod est alienum a fide. In ipso enim est ultima perfectio rationalis creaturae, quia est ei principium essendi, intantum enim unumquodque perfectum est, inquantum ad suum principium attingit. Similiter etiam est praeter rationem."

[18] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 3, a. 8: "ultima et perfecta beatitudo non potest esse nisi in visione divinae essentiae."

of God, the natural desire to see the divine essence remains.[19] He proposes that the intellect moves the will by specifying and determining the ultimate good of the will.[20]

The chronological overview of Aquinas's texts shows that Aquinas eventually worked out that human nature is naturally inclined to, naturally ordered to, and naturally desires the beatific vision of God's essence. Yet this inclination, ordering, and desire are insufficient for the human being to attain the vision. Aquinas eventually determines that grace and the infused virtues sufficiently order, sufficiently incline, and proportion human nature and its powers to the beatific vision.

My work on Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* stalled around November 2020. I struggled to get through the section on the divine will, divine providence, and divine predestination (I, qq. 19-23). While I found Aquinas's texts fairly straightforward, I found the Scholastic approach to the texts, with theories about physical premotion, the distinction between sufficient and efficacious grace, and antecedent permissive decrees, very cumbersome and obscure. But there were two discoveries I made in May 2021 that helped overcome the impasse.

The first was the realization that a paper I gave first in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and again in Ottawa, Canada in 2016 provided part of the solution. I realized that Aquinas's thought on application could counteract the Scholastic theory of physical premotion and physical predetermination, which was just another deviation from Aquinas's authentic thought. It was a deviation rooted in a metaphysical separation of being and operation. The theory of physical premotion tends to look at all creatures as totally in potency to their act and need God, the first unmoved mover, to reduce them to act in a predeterminate way. Aquinas's theory of divine application, by contrast, emphasizes that the rational creature has operative powers that need to be reduced to act by God and applied to its operation. The operative power is in act, yet is in potency to operation. The rational creature has a participated capacity to act. We do not need to say that God predeterminately premoves the will of the rational creature. Rather, God sufficiently and efficaciously

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[19] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 3, a. 8: "Si igitur intellectus humanus, cognoscens essentiam alicuius effectus creati, non cognoscat de Deo nisi an est; nondum perfectio eius attingit simpliciter ad causam primam, sed remanet ei adhuc naturale desiderium inquirendi causam."

[20] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 9, a. 1.

inclines the human will to its ultimate end and applies the operative power of the human will to its act.

The second discovery was how Scholastic thinkers like Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange characterized God's antecedent will as "inefficacious." I saw that the introduction of the Scholastic distinction between sufficient grace and efficacious grace was rooted in the Scholastic characterization of God's antecedent will as inefficacious and God's consequent will as efficacious. I realized that even though Aquinas says that some things that God wills do not happen, this does not mean that God's antecedent will is inefficacious. Instead of saying against Aquinas that God's antecedent will is inefficacious, it is better to say with Aquinas that what God antecedently wills for the creature does not always happen. My approach distinguishes between the effect of God's antecedent will and what is willed for the creature. According to God's antecedent will, God wills eternal salvation for every rational creature. The effect of God's antecedent will is the natural order of the rational creature to eternal salvation.[21] This antecedent willing is always effective: every rational and intellectual creature is ordered to eternal life by divine providence.[22] This ordering does not mean that every rational creature will attain eternal life. According to God's consequent will, eternal salvation is only attained by the elect.

Discoveries and solutions like these continued to confirm to me that the approach I was taking to Aquinas's metaphysics and theology of grace was the correct one.

In 2021, I started calling my proposal and approach the "new perspective." This is a reference to a development in Pauline studies and the understanding of Paul's thought on justification. While the old perspective is based on Martin Luther's interpretation of the role of faith and works in justification, the new perspective corrects Luther's misinterpretation and strives for a more authentic first-century Judaism understanding of Paul's actual thought.

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[21] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent*., d. 46, q. 1, a. 1: "Et hujus voluntatis effectus est ipse ordo naturae in finem salutis."

[22] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 23, a. 3: "per divinam providentiam homines in vitam aeternam ordinentur."

In the same way, I saw that there was an "old perspective" on Aquinas's theology of grace which deviates in many ways from Aquinas's authentic thought. The old perspective adds many cumbersome distinctions not found in Aquinas and actually opposes Aquinas on many points. The old perspective holds that, in this economic order of providence, the human being is naturally inclined and ordered to metaphysical knowledge of God. In this order of providence, God has revealed to us that the human being is called, in this order of providence, to the beatific vision. In this order of providence, we have an obediential potency, i.e., a mere non-repugnance, to the beatific vision. In this order of providence, the human being is not ordered to the beatific vision without grace and only conditionally desires the vision if it is known that God exists. According to the old perspective, hypothetical souls in limbo do not suffer on account of the lack of the vision because they only have a conditional desire for the vision.

Again and again, I found it curious that the old perspective appealed so often to hypothetical economic orders of providence, the hypothesis of pure nature, and hypothetical souls in limbo to reread all of Aquinas's texts on grace. Rather than clarify Aquinas's text, these hypotheses seem only to obscure his thought and deviate from it.

According to the new perspective, the human being by nature is naturally and insufficiently ordered to the beatific vision. The human being by nature has a passive potency to the act of seeing God's essence. Unlike natural potencies that are reducible to act by a natural agent, the passive potency to the beatific vision can only be reduced to act by God. The gift of grace sufficiently orders and proportions human nature to the beatific vision, the infused virtue of faith sufficiently inclines the intellect to the beatific vision, the infused virtues of hope and charity sufficiently incline the will to the beatific vision. Empowered by grace and disposed by the infused virtues the human being can operate meritoriously to the attainment of eternal life.

The theological and psychological fear of the old perspective proponents is that any affirmation of a natural desire of the will and intellect for the beatific vision would deny the gratuitousness of grace and glory. The old perspective tries to defend the gratuitousness of grace by arguing that the natural desire is an elicited and conditional desire and that human beings could have been created without any order or call to the vision of God's essence.

The new perspective does not impose this framework on Aquinas's texts. The natural desire for the vision of God's essence, because it is without the consideration of whether or not it is possible to attain the vision, does not demand that God actually offer the gratuitous gift of grace. When Aquinas posits that God could have created our first parents without grace, this hypothetical does not imply that they would not have a natural desire for or a natural inclination to the vision of God's essence. Aquinas continually affirms that human beings, who have a natural desire for the vision of God's essence, would have been created in vain if it were not possible to attain the beatific vision. Aquinas does not say that the human being is created in vain if God does not actually offer grace and glory to human beings. Aquinas's position is that even though human being are naturally inclined to the vision of God's essence, the offer of grace remains gratuitous and is not due to human nature. Throughout the dissertation I provided over twenty-four charts which contrasted the old and new perspectives, showing how each perspective interprets important texts from Aquinas.[23]

The week I turned in my dissertation, I attended the XI International Thomistic Congress at the Angelicum. There, I learned that a Dominican sister of the Holy Spirit, Marie de l'Assomption, O.P. had published the first of two massive volumes on nature and grace according to St. Thomas Aquinas.[24] Her approach, which she called an "integral reading" (*lecture intégrale*) of the Thomistic *corpus*, came to conclusions similar to mine. She takes a thematic approach and analyzes each

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[23] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent*., d. 47, q. 1, a. 1; *In II Sent*., d. 33, q. 2, a. 2; *In III Sent*., d. 23, q. 1, a. 4; *In III Sent*., d. 24, q. 1, a. 3; *In III Sent*., d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 ad 4; *In III Sent*., d. 27, q. 2, a. 3 ad 5; *In IV Sent*., d. 49, q. 1, a. 4 qa. 1 ad 2; *De ueritate*, q. 14, a. 2; *De ueritate*, q. 22, a. 7; *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 5; *Super Boethium De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4 ad 5; *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 50; *Compendium theologiae*, I, ch. 104; *De malo*, q. 5, a. 3; *De uirtutibus*, q. 1, a. 10; *De uirtutibus*, q. 1, a. 10 ad 13; *De uirtutibus*, q. 4, a. 1 (*De spe*, q. 1, a. 1); *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 12, a. 1; *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 23, a. 1; *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 62, a. 2; *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 3, a. 8; *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 62, a. 1; *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 63, a. 2 ad 1; *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 109.

[24] M. DE L'ASSOMPTION, *Nature et grâce chez saint Thomas d'Aquin. L'homme capable de Dieu*, Parole et Silence, Paris 2021, pp. 858. M. DE L'ASSOMPTION, *De la grâce à la beatitude. Nature et grâce chez saint Thomas d'Aquin II. Nouvelles perspectives*, Parole et Silence, Paris 2022, pp. 832.

theme, while my dissertation takes a chronological approach and considers the common themes in each work of Aquinas as a whole.

I truly hope that my work inspires theologians and gives them the confidence to abandon the methodological, metaphysical, anthropological, and theological deficiencies of the old perspective and embrace the new. I humbly submit my "new perspective," grounded in a recovery of Aquinas's authentic metaphysics, as a recovery of Aquinas's authentic thought on the relationship of human nature and divine grace.

This book is the first edition of my dissertation. I am sure there will be many critiques and objections to my work. I look forward to addressing these in a second edition which I hope to call: *Aquinas's Theology of God: The Metaphysics of Recreation according to the New Perspective*. I foresee it being divided into three volumes. Volume One will expand the overview of recent scholarship and address the connection between the metaphysics of Transcendental Thomism and Rahner's theology of grace. Volume Two will add a chapter on Aquinas's biblical commentaries to the comprehensive, chronological, contextualized reading of Aquinas's theology of grace. I also hope to provide compelling reasons for choosing the new perspective reading of the debated texts. Volume Three will expand the concluding synthesis, especially the section on the glorified image of God.

Introduction

Throughout his works, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) often employed metaphysical notions to expound the theological mystery of grace. Recently, Matthew Levering has defended the role of metaphysics in Aquinas's Trinitarian theology.[1] Levering argues that Aquinas's theology integrates metaphysics and that Scripture itself is infused with metaphysics: "Aquinas's theology of wisdom indicates the path by which his theology of the triune God integrates metaphysical analysis while remaining governed by scriptural revelation, itself infused with metaphysical contemplation."[2] It is my hope that this dissertation contributes in a similar way to understanding Aquinas's theology of grace and the metaphysics integrated within it.[3]

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[1] M. LEVERING, *Scripture and Metaphysics. Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*, Blackwell, Malden 2004, p. 21: "Metaphysical concepts enable the speculative theologian to present the revealed mysteries as intelligible *truth* that fulfill humankind's thirst for truth. For John Paul II, if dogmatic theology is not informed by metaphysical speculation, it cannot articulate the meaning of Scripture, because the mysteries revealed in Scripture are salvific truths intended for all human beings. Scripture's meaning cannot be conveyed solely by more stories in addition to the stories of Scripture. Rather, the narrative of Scripture requires from the theologian the metaphysical questioning that investigates the revealed mysteries by seeking their 'ontological, causal and communicative structures,' [*Fides et Ratio*, n. 66] and thus enables the theologian to express judgments about the meaning of Scripture's claims about God and human beings."

[2] M. LEVERING, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, p. 28.

[3] S. GAINE, "Aristotle's Philosophy in Aquinas's Theology of Grace in the *Summa Theologiae*," in *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology*, G. EMERY and M. LEVERING (eds.), Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015, p. 120: "Until fairly recently the theology of grace was largely pursued along the lines of a personalism, possessed of its own insights, but that had nevertheless tried to jettison the metaphysical theology of an older age, together with concepts such

The metaphysical notions that Aquinas employs with regard to the theological mystery of grace can be grouped around three types of causality: efficient causality, formal causality, and final causality.[4] First, Aquinas uses the notions of principle, rationale (*ratio*), cause, and effect, to relate divine predestination, Christ's humanity, the sacraments, grace, justification, merit, and glory to one another. God, for example, is called the principal efficient cause of grace.[5] Grace and glory are presented as two temporal effects of eternal predestination.[6] Grace is called the principle of merit,[7] while grace empowered human

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as the 'supernatural.' It now seems doubtful on the basis of this experiment whether a purely personalist theology of grace can deliver everything that a theology of grace needs to deliver, and so a more metaphysical grounding is required. The renewal of debate over the character and function of the natural desire for the supernatural bears witness to this fact." For a defense of the instrumental role of metaphysics in Aquinas's theology of grace, see R. HÜTTER, *Bound for Beatitude. A Thomistic Study in Eschatology and Ethics*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C. 2019, pp. 86-150. See also his *Dust Bound for Heaven. Explorations in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas,* Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2012, pp. 29-71.

[4] Efficient causality concerns principles that influence the being (*esse*) of an effect insofar as the effect is moved (reduction of potency to act; eduction of act from potency) or produced by its cause and, in turn, depends in some way on its cause. Formal causality concerns intrinsic principles that actuate a potency in some way. Final causality concerns principles that order, attract, or govern an effect to its end or motivate, so to speak, the efficient cause to act.

[5] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 112, a. 1. See S. GAINE, "Aristotle's Philosophy in Aquinas's Theology of Grace in the *Summa theologiae*," p. 110: "[Aquinas] thus concludes that no creature has the power to cause grace, or else that creature would be acting beyond the capacities of its nature by causing an effect of greater power than itself. With every creature ruled out, it is clear that only God can 'deify' (*deificare*) the rational creature, that is, bestow on it a share in the divine nature through his being the efficient cause of some participated likeness given to it. What is important to note, however, is that Aquinas takes this conclusion to count only for the *principal* efficient cause, leaving open the possibility of the subordinate involvement of creaturely causes in the efficient causation of grace."

[6] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Super ad Ephesios*, I, lect. 1, n. 12: "Nam, effectus praedestinationis sunt duo, scilicet gratia et gloria."

[7] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ueritate*, q. 6, a. 2 sed contra 2: "gratia est effectus praedestinationis, est autem principium meriti."

actions are called the meritorious cause of glory.[8] Justification is the effect of operating grace and merit is the effect of cooperating grace.[9] Christ's humanity and the seven Sacraments of the Church are considered as instrumental efficient causes of grace.[10]

Second, Aquinas draws on the notions of form, habit, quality, perfection, being (*esse*), and participation to clarify the relationship between the human soul and grace.[11] Grace is described as a created spiritual form that confers spiritual being (*esse spirituale*) to the soul of

[8] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ueritate*, q. 6, a. 2: "In praedestinatione autem est duo accipere; scilicet ipsam praedestinationem aeternam, et effectum eius temporalem duplicem, scilicet gratiam et gloriam: quorum alter habet causam meritoriam actum humanum, scilicet gloria; sed gratiae causa non potest esse humanus actus per modum meriti, sed sicut dispositio materialis quaedam, inquantum per actus praeparamur ad gratiae susceptionem. Sed ex hoc non sequitur quod actus nostri, sive gratiam praecedant, sive sequantur, sint ipsius praedestinationis causa."

[9] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 113: "Deinde considerandum est de effectibus gratiae. Et primo, de iustificatione impii, quae est effectus gratiae operantis; secundo, de merito, quod est effectus gratiae cooperantis."

[10] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 7; q. 29, a. 4. See S. GAINE, "Aristotle's Philosophy in Aquinas's Theology of Grace in the *Summa Theologiae*," p. 111: "Aquinas refined his own notion of instrumental causality, where the instrument does its work through the motion of the principal cause, and he applies this systematically to Christ's humanity and the sacraments later in the *Summa*. Thus, while God is the principal cause of grace, Christ's humanity and the sacraments are its instrumental causes. Whereas in earlier works Aquinas had limited their instrumental causation to producing a disposition for grace, he now thinks of them as instrumentally causing grace itself."

[11] S. GAINE, "Aristotle's Philosophy in Aquinas's Theology of Grace," p. 112: "Aquinas had placed the habit of grace in the category of accident, and grace is thus the "accidental form" by which a human being is now made a participant in the divine nature. However, given the principle that no form can exist in matter unless that matter is disposed for it, Aquinas says its human recipient must in some way be disposed for this form of grace."

rational creatures.[12] Grace is an accidental form that perfects our nature.[13] Grace is a certain perfection that elevates the human soul to supernatural being (*esse supernaturale*).[14] Grace is like a habit, yet it is not immediately ordered to an operation like other habits; it is a habit ordered to spiritual being (*esse spirituale*).[15] Before the infusion of grace, Aquinas holds that a human being is not yet a participant of divine being (*esse divinum*).[16]

Third, Aquinas often uses notions connected to final causality[17] to expound the relation between providence, nature, grace, and glory. These notions include desire, order, appetite, inclination, tendency, proportion, and disposition. Aquinas holds that human beings are ordered to their ultimate end of eternal life by divine providence.[18] The human being is naturally inclined to their ultimate end, but cannot naturally attain their ultimate end.[19] To attain their ultimate end, human beings

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[12] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 1 ad 3: "Et similiter esse spirituale gratuitum Deus facit in nobis nullo agente mediante, sed tamen mediante aliqua forma creata, quae est gratia."

[13] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 8 ad 2: "gratia non tollat naturam, sed perficiat."

[14] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 3: "Gratia enim […] est quaedam perfectio elevans animam ad quoddam esse supernaturale."

[15] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 7 ad 7: "gratia est in prima specie qualitatis, quamvis non proprie possit dici habitus, quia non immediate ordinatur ad actum, sed ad quoddam esse spirituale quod in anima facit, et est sicut dispositio quae est respectu gloriae, quae est gratia consummata."

[16] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In II Sent*., d. 27, q. 1, a. 5 ad 3: "Ante infusionem gratiae homo nondum est particeps divini esse."

[17] S. GAINE, "Aristotle's Philosophy in Aquinas's Theology of Grace in the *Summa Theologiae*," p. 113: "Aquinas does not have a separate article [in the *Summa theologiae*] to treat the final grace of grace, but the purpose and end of grace has been in view throughout the treatise: grace heals and elevates us so that God can bring us to himself; it grants us a certain participation in the divine nature, which is the seed of a full participation in the divine nature in heaven."

[18] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 23, a. 3: "per divinam providentiam homines in vitam aeternam ordinentur."

[19] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Boetii De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4 ad 5: "Quamvis enim homo naturaliter inclinetur in finem ultimum, non tamen potest naturaliter illum consequi, sed solum per gratiam, et hoc est propter eminentiam illius finis."

need the help of divine grace, which *sufficiently* orders human nature to eternal life, i.e., the vision of God's essence.[20] The created intellect has a potency to the vision of God's essence, but this potency cannot be reduced to act by the agent intellect or any connatural agent; it can only be reduced to act by God.[21] Grace is said to be like a disposition to glory[22] and is the beginning of glory in us; glory, on the other hand, is called "consummated grace."[23]

As Aquinas's frequent recourse to metaphysical notions makes clear, an understanding of the metaphysical structure of the acting human person is necessary to grasp how grace brings about participation in divine being (*esse divinum*). In brief, the spiritual soul of the human being, created immediately by God, limits and specifies its con-created act of being, orders the human being to its ultimate end through its proper operation, and gives rise to its many operative powers. Acquired operative good habits, which perfect the operative powers, dispose the human agent to operate or act rightly.[24] Divine grace, given gratuitously by God, confers spiritual being or divine being to the human being and resides in the essence of the soul – and not the powers of the soul – as

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[20] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 5: "Cuius ratio est, quia gratia dicitur secundum quod per eam homo ordinatur in vitam aeternam sufficienter: dicitur enim gratus quasi acceptatus a Deo ut habeat vitam aeternam."

[21] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Compendium theologiae*, I, ch. 104: "Est autem impossibile nos ultimum finem consequi per hoc quod intellectus noster sic reducatur in actum […]. Consequimur igitur ultimum finem in hoc quod intellectus noster fiat in actu aliquo sublimiori agente quam sit agens nobis connaturale, quod quiescere faciat desiderium quod nobis inest naturaliter ad sciendum."

[22] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 2 ad 7: "gratia est in prima specie qualitatis, quamvis non proprie possit dici habitus, quia non immediate ordinatur ad actum, sed ad quoddam esse spirituale quod in anima facit, et est sicut dispositio quae est respectu gloriae, quae est gratia consummata."

[23] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 24, a. 3 ad 2 and I, q. 95, a. 1; I-II, q. 111, a. 3 ad 2. See P. O'CALLAGHAN, p. 238: "For this reason [Aquinas] says that grace is the '*inchoatio gloriae in nobis*' (the beginning and guarantee of glory in us), whereas the light of glory is '*gratia consummata*' (consummated grace)."

[24] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 6: "sicut virtutes perficiunt potentias ad recte operandum."

its subject. Although the human being is naturally inclined to its ultimate end by human nature, it is *insufficiently* inclined by this nature, meaning that the operative powers of intellect and will are naturally ordered to God who is the first truth and supreme good, but are insufficient and unable to produce on their own the meritorious operations by which the human being attains the ultimate end of the beatific vision of God's essence. The gift of divine grace, however, *sufficiently* and *fittingly* orders and proportions the human being to their ultimate end, heals the human soul wounded by original sin, elevates the human being to participate in divine being, and functions as the intrinsic principle of meritorious operations. The three infused virtues (operative good habits) of faith, hope, and charity sufficiently incline the operative powers of intellect and will to the beatific vision and dispose the justified human agent to perform meritorious operations proportionate to the attainment of eternal life.

This brief overview of Aquinas's thought on nature and grace demonstrates how a proper understanding of the metaphysical notions within the theology of grace – notions such as operation, being, participation, order, inclination, habit, power – is of utmost importance. The metaphysics of grace explores the intrinsic relationship between nature and grace but also the extrinsic causal relationships between divine providence and the natural ordering of human nature to its ultimate end and between divine predestination and the attainment of eternal salvation by the elect.

Aquinas has a deeply Trinitarian understanding of the mystery of grace and once again employs metaphysical notions to expound this understanding. All creatures, rational and irrational, proceed from God and thus possess a vestige (a trace or footprint) of the Trinity. Creatures return to God, however, in different ways in accord with their diverse natures. While all creatures possess a vestige of God, only rational and intellectual creatures are created "to the image of God" (*ad imaginem Dei*). The rationale (*ratio*) and cause of the temporal procession (*exitus*) of creatures is found in the two eternal Trinitarian processions of Word and Love.[25] The return (*reditus*) of rational creatures is governed by the two temporal Trinitarian missions: rational creatures, created in the image of God, are able, by means of the gift of grace and the infused virtues, to return in the Spirit, who is Love, through the Son, who is the

[25] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent*., d. 10, q. 1, a. 1.

Word, to the Father.[26] The effect of the indwelling of Love, the Spirit of God, by means of grace, is charity (*inflammatio affectus*). The effect of the indwelling of the Word, the Son of God, by means of grace, is wisdom (*illuminatio intellectus*).[27]

The literature on Aquinas's theology of grace is abundant and daunting in its breadth and scope. This dissertation, which focuses on Aquinas's metaphysics of grace, seeks to contribute in three ways.

First, it acknowledges three main divergent historical interpretations of Aquinas's metaphysics and how they lead to divergent interpretations of Aquinas's theology of grace. In this dissertation, I propose to explore Aquinas's metaphysics of grace relying primarily on insights from the metaphysical perspective of Cornelio Fabro. Unlike the interpretation of the traditional Scholastic interpreters, led primarily by Cardinal Thomas de Vio "Cajetan," O.P. and that of the twentieth-century Transcendental Thomists, led by Karl Rahner, S.J., Fabro's interpretation gives priority to the act of being, sees it as the act of all acts and the intrinsic source of all perfection, and holds that the notion of participation is central to Thomistic metaphysics. The importance of correctly understanding the notions of participation and being (*esse*) is immediately apparent with regard to Aquinas's theology of grace. On the one hand, sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*) is described by Aquinas as a "certain participation of divine nature,"[28] and, on the other, grace is presented by Aquinas as an accidental form that mediates spiritual

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[26] G. EMERY, "Trinity and Creation," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 67-68: The processions that are the cause of the *reditus* are the missions of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Let us recall that the mission (*missio*) of the divine person consists in his eternal procession to which a created effect is joined, namely, sanctifying grace [*Summa theologiae*, I, q. 43, aa. 1-3]. The structure of the divine missions is the following: the proper effect of the mission of the Spirit is to conduct us to the Son, and the proper effect of the mission of the Son is to conduct us to the Father [*In Iohannes*. I.43.1-3]."

[27] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 43, a. 5 ad 3: "Si autem quantum ad effectum gratiae, sic communicant duae missiones in radice gratiae, sed distinguuntur in effectibus gratiae, qui sunt illuminatio intellectus, et inflammatio affectus."

[28] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 112, a. 1: "Donum autem gratiae excedit omnem facultatem naturae creatae, cum nihil aliud sit quam quaedam participatio divinae naturae, quae excedit omnem aliam naturam."

being (*esse spirituale*) – also called the being of grace (*esse gratiae*) – to rational creatures.

As a second contribution, the dissertation takes into account several recent studies on grace in Aquinas and on themes connected to the theology and metaphysics of grace.[29] These topics concern the Trinitarian processions and missions,[30] the image of God,[31] the debate on the

[29] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación de la naturaleza divina según santo Tomas de Aquino*, Universidades Pontificias, Buenos Aires – Letrán – Salamanca 1979; Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God's Grace: Deification according to St. Thomas Aquinas*, Sapientia Press, Ave Maria 2015.

[30] G. EMERY, *The Trinitarian Theology of St Thomas Aquinas,* Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010. Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas*, Oxford University Press, New York 2017.

[31] D. MERRIELL, *To the Image of the Trinity: A Study in the Development of Aquinas' Teaching*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto 1990.

natural desire to see God,[32] the role of predestination[33] and the development of Aquinas's thought on merit.[34] The dissertation addresses the

[32] H. DE LUBAC, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, Herder & Herder, New York 1967; J. LAPORTA, *La destinée de la nature humaine selon Thomas d'Aquin*, Vrin, Paris 1965; D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good: Reason and Human Happiness in Aquinas's Moral Science*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 1997; S. LONG, "Obediential Potency, Human Knowledge, and the Natural Desire for God," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 27 (1997), pp. 45-63; S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End for Man: A Response to Denis Bradley," *The Thomist* 64 (2000), pp. 211-237; J. MILBANK, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Renewed Split in Modern Catholic Theology*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2005[1], 2014[2]; N. HEALY, "Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace: A Note on Some Recent Contributions to the Debate," *Communio* 35 (2008), pp. 535-564; S.-T. BONINO (ed.), *Surnaturel: A Controversy at the Heart of Twentieth-century Thomistic Thought*, Sapientia Press, Naples 2009; R. HÜTTER, "Aquinas on the Natural Desire for the Vision of God: A Relecture of *Summa Contra Gentiles III, c. 25 après Henri de Lubac*," *The Thomist* 73 (2009), pp. 523-591; C. CUNNINGHAM, "Natura Pura, the Invention of the Anti-Christ: A Week with No Sabbath," *Communio* 37 (2010), pp. 243-254; L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, Sapientia Press, Naples 2010; S. LONG, *Natura pura. On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace*, Fordham University Press, New York 2010; R. MAYER, "Man is Inclined to His Last End by Nature, Though He Cannot Reach It by Nature But Only by Grace. The Principle of the Debate about Nature and Grace in Thomas Aquinas, Thomism and Henri de Lubac. A Response to Lawrence Feingold," *Angelicum* 88 (2011), pp. 887-939; M. MULCAHY, *Aquinas's Notion of Pure Nature and the Christian Integralism of Henri de Lubac: Not Everything is Grace*, P. Lang, New York 2011; D. GRUMETT, "De Lubac, Grace, and the Pure Nature Debate," *Modern Theology* 31 (2015), pp. 123-146; S. SANZ SANCHEZ – J. WATSON, "The Revival of the Notion of Pure Nature in Recent Debates in English Speaking Theology," *Annales Theologici* 31 (2017), pp. 171-250; A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre le désir naturel de voir Dieu selon saint Thomas d'Aquin (I)," *Revue Thomiste* 117 (2017), p. 397-416; *ibid*., "Une clef pour comprendre le désir naturel de voir Dieu selon saint Thomas d'Aquin (II)," *Revue Thomiste* 117 (2017), pp. 531-568 ; J.. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart: Thomas Aquinas and Henri de Lubac on Nature, Grace, and the Desire for God*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 2019.

need to integrate these recent contributions within a broader study on Aquinas's metaphysics of grace.

Third, the dissertation provides a comprehensive, contextualized, and chronological presentation of Aquinas's metaphysics of grace. It starts with his metaphysics of grace as found in the *Scriptum super libros sententiarum* (1252-56) and moves through works like *De ueritate* (1256-59), *Summa contra Gentiles* (1261-63), *Compendium theologiae* (1265-67), and ends with the *Summa theologiae* (1265-73).[35] This comprehensive, contextualized, and chronological presentation will bring to light the points of continuity, outline the development in his thought, and enable a much deeper understanding of Aquinas's mature exposition of the metaphysics of grace.

1. Three Interpretations of Aquinas's Metaphysics

Aquinas's metaphysics has been interpreted in a variety of divergent ways and these diverse interpretations inevitably influence how his theology of grace has been understood. One can discern three principal interpretive approaches to Aquinas's metaphysics.[36]

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[33] *Thomism and Predestination: Principles and Disputations*, edited by S. LONG, R. NUTT, and T. WHITE, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 2017; M. LEVERING, *Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011; T. O'NEILL, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington D.C. 2019.

[34] J. WAWRYKOW, *God's Grace & Human Action. 'Merit' in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 1995.

[35] For reasons of space, I have decided to leave Aquinas's theology and metaphysics of grace, as present in his biblical commentaries on the Gospel of John and the Letters of Paul, for a future work.

[36] See especially the work of Alain Contat: "Le figure della differenza ontologica nel tomismo del Novecento (prima parte), *Alpha Omega* 11 (2008), pp. 77-129; "Le figure della differenza ontologica nel tomismo del Novecento (seconda parte), *Alpha Omega* 11 (2008), pp. 213-50; "La quarta via di san Tommaso d'Aquino e le prove di Dio di sant'Anselmo di Aosta secondo le tre configurazioni dell'ente tomistico," in *Sant'Anselmo d'Aosta 'Doctor Magnificus': A 900 anni della morte*, C. PANDOLFI and J. VILLAGRASA (eds.), IF Press, Rome 2011, pp. 103-174; "Il confronto con Heidegger nel tomismo

First, there is the classical or Scholastic approach, which tends to read Aquinas through the lens of his Renaissance and Baroque Dominican commentators. These commentators-interpreters include: Jean Capreolus, O.P. (c. 1380-1444), Cardinal Thomas de Vio, O.P. "Cajetan" (1469-1534), Francesco Silvestri, O.P. "Ferrariensis" (1474-1528), Domingo Báñez, O.P. (1528-1604), and John of Saint Thomas, O.P. (1589-1644). A key Twentieth-century representative of this tradition or approach is Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. (1877-1964). Several contemporary scholars, such as Lawrence Feingold, Steven A. Long, Tomáš Týn, O.P. (1950-1990), and Thomas Joseph White, O.P., all belong in different ways to this tradition.

Second, there is the approach of Transcendental Thomism, which tends to read Aquinas through the lens of Kant and Heidegger, and is exemplified by Joseph Maréchal, S.J. (1878-1944), Johannes Baptist Lotz, S.J. (1903-1992), and Karl Rahner, S.J. (1904-1984).

A third approach, developed especially by Cornelio Fabro, C.S.S. (1911-1995) and Étienne Gilson (1884-1978), discerns a divergence between Aquinas and his scholastic and transcendental interpreters. This third approach is highly attentive to the sources of Aquinas's thought, to the development of Aquinas's thought from his early to mature works, the principles at work in his thought, and to the subsequent history of interpretation.[37] In particular, Fabro's approach has emerged as one of the strongest candidates for an authentic interpretation of Aquinas's metaphysics,[38] and strives to avoid the pitfalls of the return

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contemporaneo," *Alpha Omega* 14 (2011), pp. 195-266; "L'analyse de l'étant et le constitutif de la personne dans le thomisme du xx siècle," *Espíritu* 62 (2013), pp. 241-75; L'analogia dell'ente e l'Essere sussistente nel tomismo contemporaneo," *Alpha Omega* 20 (2017), pp. 635-97; "La constitution de l'étant dans le thomisme contemproain: Tomas Tyn, Johann Baptist Lotz, Cornelio Fabro," in M. RAFFRAY (ed.), *Actus Essendi. Saint Thomas d'Aquin et ses interprètes*, Parole et Silence, Paris 2019, pp. 369-433.

[37] J. MITCHELL, *Being and Participation: The Method and Structure of Metaphysical Reflection according to Cornelio Fabro*, Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum, Rome 2012.

[38] B. SHANLEY, *The Thomist Tradition*, p. 9: "Towering above all Thomistic metaphysicians, and providing a much needed corrective to Gilson, was Cornelio Fabro. Like Gilson, Fabro emphasized the primacy of *esse* in Aquinas's metaphysics. But at least early on, Gilson had something of a blind spot

to Aquinas through the scholastic commentator tradition and of the transcendental re-reading of Aquinas with the lens of Immanuel Kant and Martin Heidegger. Fabro devoted his two major works in Thomistic metaphysics to the notion of participation.[39] His interpretation of Aquinas's texts led him to oppose strongly Louis-Bertrand Geiger's twofold division of participation[40] as well as the Scholastic reduction of the act of being (*actus essendi*) to factual existence. For his part, Fabro proposed a division between predicamental and transcendental participation and understood the act of being (*actus essendi*) as the intensive, actuating, emergent, first, and ultimate act of a being (*ens*).

My working hypothesis in this dissertation is that the three interpretive approaches to and configurations of Thomistic metaphysics each lead to three different interpretations of Aquinas's theology of grace. This dissertation will not directly engage the correlation between the metaphysical interpretation of Transcendental Thomism and Rahner's theological doctrine of grace. My goal is to expound Aquinas's theology of grace, inspired primarily by the metaphysical work of Cornelio Fabro. I will continually contrast this "new perspective" with the Scholastic "old perspective." In this introduction, I do want to review briefly the main criticisms leveled at the Scholastic interpreters, such as Cajetan, Ferrariensis, Báñez, and Garrigou-Lagrange, who characterize the natural desire to see God as a conditional and elicited desire, posit an obediential potency as mere non-repugnance to the beatific vision, introduce a distinction between sufficient and efficacious grace founded on the distinction between God's antecedent and consequent will, and tend to see grace as a formal participation in deity (*deitas*).[41]

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when it came to the way in which Aquinas's understanding of *esse* and its role in his metaphysics was influenced by the Neoplatonic idea of participation."

[39] C. FABRO, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino*, Opere complete 3, EDIVI, Segni 2005; Cornelio Fabro, *Partecipazione e causalità secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino*, Opere complete 19, EDIVI, Segni 2010.

[40] L.-B. GEIGER, *La participation dans la philosophie de S. Thomas d'Aquin*, Vrin, Paris 1942; See H. JOHN, *The Thomist Spectrum*, Fordham University Press, New York 1966, 108-122.

[41] For a critique of the Scholastic approach to grace (Ambroise Gardeil and Garrigou-Lagrange), see A. CONTAT, "Réflexions sur l'ontologie de l'état de grâce et de l'état de péché," in S.-T. BONINO and G. MAZZOTTA (eds.), *San*

With regard to the natural desire to see God, Cajetan's view is that "human nature has a natural end that is realizable by its natural capacities (imperfect beatitude) and a supernatural end that can only be realized by God's supernatural assistance (perfect beatitude)."[42] Brian Shanley, O.P. assesses this position as follows:

> The advantage of [Cajetan's] view is twofold: it saves the Aristotelian correlation of nature and end via natural capacities, and it saves the gratuitousness of the supernatural as something that is not due human nature but rather is a purely gratuitous gift elevating nature to a new dimension. Yet the price of such a picture is that grace then comes to seem extrinsic to human nature because the latter is completed by a natural end. What results is a two-tiered picture of man as having both a natural end and a supernatural end wherein the relationship of the latter to the former seems foreign and extrinsic.[43]

Cajetan's interpretation was famously criticized by Cardinal Henri de Lubac, S.J. (1896-1991). De Lubac's criticism re-opened the question of how to characterize properly Aquinas's thought on the openness of human nature to supernatural fulfillment. To safeguard the gratuitousness of grace, the old perspective of the Cajetanian Thomists described human nature as having only an obediential potency to grace. Shanley criticizes this position as follows:

> Yet careful study of Aquinas's own texts have shown that he did not think the concept of obediential potency was apt to describe the relationship of human nature to grace. For Aquinas, an obediential potency describes the openness of a created nature to the miraculous action of God to something beyond its nature. The relationship of human nature to grace, however, is not like that. Grace is not a miracle, like stone becoming bread, but rather the fulfillment of our nature. So the human openness

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Tommaso e la salvezza, [Doctor Communis], Urbaniana University Press, Rome 2020, pp. 167-173.

[42] B. SHANLEY, *The Thomist Tradition*, p. 164.

[43] B. SHANLEY, *The Thomist Tradition*, p. 164.

> to the divine is neither mere non-repugnance nor a naturally realizable capacity. We are created as open to, apt for, and indeed ordered to beatific vision because we are created in the image of God.[44]

Against Cajetan, Henri de Lubac argues that the position of Thomas Aquinas is that human nature has a *natural order*, and not an obediential potency as mere non-repugnance, to the reception of sanctifying grace.[45] This view, he holds, in no way compromises the gratuitousness of the gift of divine grace. Regarding Aquinas's position, de Lubac writes that human nature has a natural order to the reception of grace:

> [H]uman nature should [not] be conceived first of all as normally endowed with a 'purely natural' finality, and only fitted to receive supernatural finality *praeter naturam* or *contra naturam*, by a definite miraculous intervention. Quite the reverse – for [Aquinas] as for his emulator St Bonaventure, it is precisely because the ultimate finality of this human nature is supernatural that it can receive sanctifying grace. There is in it not only a *potentia obedentiae*, but a certain *ordo naturalis* to the receiving of that grace, whereas in the case of miracle such *ordo naturalis* does not exist.[46]

For Aquinas, the human soul is naturally capable of grace.[47] De Lubac shows that Cajetan rejected this principle: "[Cajetan] reduces the case

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[44] B. SHANLEY, *The Thomist Tradition*, p. 166.

[45] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In IV Sent*., d. 17, q. 1, a. 5 qc. 1: "Et ideo ille effectus qui immediate est a Deo tantum, et tamen inest recipienti *ordo naturalis* ad recipiendum illum effectum non per alium modum quam per istum, non erit miraculosus; sicut patet de infusione animae rationalis. Et similiter est de justificatione impii: quia ordo naturalis inest animae ad justitiae rectitudinem consequendam: nec alio modo eam consequi potest quam a Deo immediate; et ideo justificatio impii de se non est miraculosa; sed potest habere aliquid miraculosum adjunctum, quod justificationi viam parat."

[46] H. DE LUBAC, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, p. 183.

[47] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 113, a. 10: "Et quantum ad hoc, iustificatio impii non est miraculosa, quia naturaliter anima est gratiae capax; *eo enim ipso quod facta est ad imaginem Dei, capax est Dei per gratiam*, ut Augustinus dicit."

of the supernatural destiny of created spirit to a particular instance of miracle."[48] Jacob Schmutz posits that the Scholastic hypothesis of a natural desire unconnected to a supernatural end was made possible by developments in the medieval reflection on secondary (creaturely) causality.[49]

Throughout the centuries, the old perspective of the Scholastic interpretation of Aquinas's metaphysics of grace tended to reduce our natural desire for the vision of God's essence to a desire elicited by knowledge of God's existence.[50] In opposition to this interpretation, this dissertation will explore the distinction – employed against the backdrop of Fabro's interpretation of Aquinas's metaphysics – between our *natural and insufficient order* to the vision of God's essence by human nature and the *supernatural and sufficient order* to the vision of God's essence by divine grace.[51] In particular, my interpretation, which I call the "new perspective," opposes and corrects the old perspective in three ways.

The first difference concerns how the nature of the spiritual creature is ordered to a supernatural end. Cajetan's approach holds that the human being is naturally ordered, by human nature, to a connatural happiness and is supernaturally ordered, by divine grace, to a supernatural happiness.[52] In this approach, grace re-orders the spiritual nature to another, higher end – the beatific vision of God's essence. Cajetan

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[48] H. DE LUBAC, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, p. 185.

[49] See J. SCHMUTZ, "The Medieval Doctrine of Causality and the Theology of Pure Nature (13th to 17th Centuries)," in S.-T. BONINO (ed.), *Surnaturel: A Controversy at the Heart of Twentieth-century Thomistic Thought*, pp. 203-250.

[50] See L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 397: "Therefore, the texts of St. Thomas only show the existence of an *elicited* natural desire – following on knowledge of God's effects – and not an innate desire which would be prior to and independent of any such knowledge, and thus as blind and unconscious as a rock's tendency to fall."

[51] J. MITCHELL, "Cornelio Fabro on Supernatural Participations," in Nathaniel Dreyer (ed.) *Cornelio Fabro. Essential Thinker. Philosopher of Being and of Freedom, Acts of the Fabro Symposium, Studia Fabriana, Vol. 1*, IVE Press, Chillum 2017, p. 109.

[52] See D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good. Reason and Happiness in Aquinas's Moral Science*, CUA Press, Washington DC 1997, p. 440

posits a non-repugnance or "obediential potency" to this vision previous to the gift of divine grace.[53] In contrast to Cajetan's view, I hold that we can account for the twofold ordering of human nature to its ultimate end by attending to Aquinas's distinction between a *natural* and *insufficient* ordering, by nature, to the beatific vision and a *supernatural* and *sufficient* ordering, by grace and the infused virtues, to the beatific vision. I will argue that Aquinas does not envision the work of grace as re-ordering human nature to a different ultimate end, but rather continually affirms in his mature works that grace *sufficiently* orders human nature to the ultimate end that it cannot attain by its natural powers alone. When Aquinas uses the term "potency of obedience" (*potentia obedientiae*) to refer to the potency of the created intellect for the beatific vision, he does so to say that it can only be reduced to act by a higher agent. The potency of the human intellect to the beatific vision does not mean merely that the beatific vision is not repugnant to our intellect, but actually implies an order to the act[54] of seeing God's essence, yet the ordering of this potency is insufficient and can only be reduced to act by divine agency.

The second difference between the old and new perspectives considers how to divide the types of participation and how to assign a type of participation to grace. The classical approach or old perspective divides "physical participation" into "virtual participation" and "formal participation." Some authors like Garrigou-Lagrange hold that grace is a "formal participation" and some, like Antonio Piolanti, hold that it is a "virtual participation." Fabro rejects this division early on in his career and divides "natural participation" into predicamental and transcendental. He posits a third type for supernatural participation, known as "touching by operation" (*attingere per operationem*) and divides this into imperfect (*in via*) and perfect (*in Patria*). Fabro's approach, I posit, can better integrate Aquinas's three modes of participation.[55]

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[53] See D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 447.

[54] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 77, a. 3: "potentia, secundum illud quod est potentia, ordinatur ad actum."

[55] The first mode is the participation of an individual or particular in a universal notion; the second mode is the participation of a subject in an act; and the third mode is the participation of an effect in its cause. See J. MITCHELL, "Cornelio Fabro on Supernatural Participations," pp. 89-114.

The third difference between the old perspective and my interpretation concerns the relationship between the being of nature (*esse naturae*) and the spiritual being of grace (*esse spirituale gratiae*). The classical approach tends to reduce being (*esse*) to existence (*existentia*) and does not distinguish adequately between being as act (*esse ut actus*) and being-in-act (*esse in actu*). According to the Scholastic view, the form of grace seems to communicate its own act of existence to the rational creature.[56] Fabro, on the other hand, sees being as act (*esse ut actus*) or the act of being (*actus essendi*) as the unique actuating act of a substance and distinguishes it from the being-in-act (*esse in actu*) proper to accidents. Grace, according to the Fabrian metaphysical approach, will not confer another act of being to the rational creature in addition to the act of being of its substance. If we posit that the spiritual being of grace is a being-in-act (*esse in actu*), we then have to explore how to articulate the relationship between the substance's unique act of being and the accidental and spiritual being of grace.

Throughout the dissertation, when a key text of Aquinas is expounded, I will present a chart that contrasts the "classical approach" or "old perspective" and the "new approach" or "new perspective." This "new perspective" is indebted to the work of many scholars, who, from Henri de Lubac onward, have contributed to a new way of reading Aquinas's text on the metaphysics and theology of grace. In the chapter that

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[56] L. ELDERS, *The Metaphysics of Being of St. Thomas Aquinas in a Historical Perspective*, E.J. Brill, Leiden 1993, p. 257: "Some scholastics applied the doctrine of the real distinction between being and essence also to accidents and distinguished between an accidental whatness and an accidental *esse*. Bañez, who is one of them, does however note that this being (*esse*) is not being *per se*, but being in a substance. The reason which moved Bañez to adopt this position was apparently that if one does not accept an *esse* proper to accidents, one is forced to speak of changes in the substantial *being* on each occasion that a substance undergoes changes on the level of its accidents. In addition Bañez had a theological argument: accidents in the supernatural order such as grace and charity cannot, given their content, be made to exist actually by the natural substantial being of man. Hence they must have some reality of their own. On the other hand, however, one can object against this position that only substance exists, and that accidents become real through the being of substance. Some texts of Aquinas, indeed, seem to exclude being as proper to accidents."

follows I review some of the more significant contemporary contributions to the old perspective and to the new perspective.

2. Contribution and Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation contributes by offering a metaphysical, comprehensive, chronological, and contextualized reading of Aquinas's writings on the theology of grace. It is *metaphysical* insofar as it is very attentive to the metaphysical notions Aquinas employs. It is *comprehensive* insofar as it takes into account the whole of Aquinas's production, the essential themes connected to grace (providence, the natural desire to see God, predestination, justification, merit, glory), and the most recent scholarship on themes related to Aquinas's metaphysics of grace. It is a *chronological* reading which can discern continuity and discontinuity, assumptions and necessary clarification, and the development of Aquinas's thought. Combined with the contextualized reading, it helps us avoid the frequent mistake of who use early texts to prove a point when clearly Aquinas's thought has developed or evolved on the point in question. It is a *contextualized* reading insofar as texts are considered in their proper place within a given work and avoids the errors that stem from removing and isolating texts from their original place and proper context.[57]

Earlier, I noted that the dissertation concentrates on the metaphysical notions Aquinas employs to expound the theological mystery of grace. I highlighted the use of efficient causality, participation and being, and notions connected to final causality, such as order and inclination. I posit that unlike the metaphysics of the old perspective of the Scholastic commentators, which deviates notably from Aquinas's original thought on the natural desire to see God, on participation, and on being (*esse*), Fabro's metaphysical interpretation is more in line with Aquinas's thought and can attend better to Aquinas's distinction between the natural and insufficient ordering to the beatific vision of the divine essence by nature and the supernatural and sufficient ordering

[57] For example, texts on the natural desire for God and the inclination or ordering of human nature to its ultimate end should not be isolated from related themes such as divine providence and predestination, man as created in the image of God, and the necessity of grace and the theological virtues.

to the vision of the Triune God by grace. Fabro's metaphysical interpretation also allows us to explore supernatural participation in divine being though grace as an imperfect *attingere Deum per operationem* and to determine Aquinas's notion of the spiritual being of grace (*esse spirituale gratiae*) as a being-in-act (*esse-in-actu*) rather than an additional act of being (*esse ut actus*).

Chapter One opens the dissertation by considering eight recent scholarly contributions to the old and new perspectives. It shows how the old perspective contributions deviate from Aquinas's thought with regard to the notion of participation and Aquinas's texts on the natural desire to see God. It makes the case that a chronological, comprehensive, and contextualized reading of Aquinas's theology of grace is warranted.

Chapter Two is dedicated to Aquinas's metaphysics of grace in his *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* (1252-56). The work is currently being translated into English and I will provide a substantial amount of newly translated texts. The more controversial texts, usually invoked by interpreters to deny or condition the natural desire to see God, are found in Book III, when Aquinas deals with the infused virtues. In this early work, Aquinas establishes the causal relationship between predestination and grace, the parallel between creation and recreation, the beatific vision as the ultimate end of man, the relationship between grace and the Trinitarian missions, and the difference between natural participation in a likeness of divine being and supernatural participation in divine being. An attentive reading of Aquinas's early text allows us to appreciate and explore his Trinitarian perspective of creation and recreation, his repeated affirmations of a natural desire and natural appetite for beatitude, the identification of our ultimate beatitude with the vision of God's essence, and how the infused virtues *sufficiently* incline our intellect and will to our ultimate end, which exceeds the *facultas* of our natural powers. While the old perspective tends to give equal weight to early and mature texts, the new perspective assumes the possibility of a development or evolution in Aquinas's thought and gives more weight to mature texts, especially if they are in some way at odds with earlier texts.

Chapter Three covers Aquinas's *De ueritate* (1256-59) and traces the development of his thought on predestination (q. 6), faith (q. 14), appetite (q. 22), grace (q. 27), merit (q. 28), and the grace of Christ (q. 29). In *De ueritate*, Aquinas is still trying to work out how the human

being is ordered to the beatific vision and holds, in this work, that to be ordered to the good of eternal life, the human person needs some inchoation of supernatural knowledge. However, in the last article of his *Expositio super Boethii De Trinitate*, most likely written between his *De ueritate* and the *Summa contra Gentiles*, we will see that Aquinas clearly states that there is a natural inclination to our ultimate end and that this ultimate end cannot be attained without grace. This text raises the question of how it should be read in light of Aquinas's earlier denial of a natural desire to see God in the *Scriptum*.

Chapter Four presents the development in Aquinas's thought found in the *Summa contra Gentiles* (1259-65). It is important to note that the ultimate end of spiritual creatures and the role of grace is dealt with in Book Three, which Aquinas holds follows the "way of reason." This highlights how Aquinas thinks that human reason can demonstrate: first, that the ultimate end and beatitude of the human being is the vision of God's essence; second, that the non-vanity of a natural desire means that the vision of God's essence is possible; and, third, that God could gratuitously bestow a divine help upon rational creatures that enables them to attain their ultimate end through meritorious actions.

Chapter Five considers an array of shorter works by Aquinas. These will be dealt with chronologically as best as possible. In particular, we will look at his *Quodlibetal Questions*, the *Compendium theologiae*, the *Quaestiones disputatae de malo*, and the *Quaestiones disputatae de uirtutibus*.

In Chapter Six, we will look at Aquinas's mature thought in the *Summa theologiae*, guided especially by the work of Gilles Emery, Daria Spezzano, and those like Alain Contat who have interpreted the mature texts of Aquinas according to what I call the "new perspective." In particular, we will look at: the providential ordering of human beings to their ultimate end; the distinction between predestination and reprobation (I, q. 23), the causality and rationale of the divine processions in creation and recreation, the indwelling of the Trinity through grace (I, q. 43); the nature of rational creatures made "to the image of God" (I, q. 93); how the ultimate and perfect happiness of man consists only in the vision of the divine essence (I-II, q. 3, a. 8); the interplay between intellect and will in the specification of the ultimate end of the rational creature (I-II, qq. 8-10), the role of the infused virtues in the sufficient ordering of the intellect and will to the ultimate end (I-II, qq. 62-63),

and how human beings are ordered to beatitude (the beatific vision), yet need grace to attain their ultimate end (I-II, q. 109).

Chapter Seven systematically presents Aquinas's theology of grace according to the "new perspective" in four points. First, the overall framework is that the eternal Trinitarian processions are the cause and rationale (*ratio*) of the temporal procession (*exitus*) of irrational and rational creatures from God and that the Trinitarian missions of the Word and Love are the rationale (*ratio*) of the return (*reditus*) of rational creatures to God. Just as we have been created through the Son and Holy Spirit, so likewise it is through them that we are united to the ultimate end.[58] Second, as imperfect images of God, rational creatures are naturally ordered by divine providence to the vision of God's essence. Rational creatures naturally desire and are naturally inclined to the beatific vision as their ultimate end, but cannot attain this ultimate end by their own natural powers. Third, to attain their ultimate end, the elect, eternally predestined by God to salvation, must be re-created and be given the habitual gift of *gratia gratum faciens*, which constitutes the rational creature in spiritual being. Rational creatures also need the three theological (infused) virtues, which sufficiently incline the powers of intellect and will to the beatific vision of God's essence. With these supernatural principles of grace and infused virtues, rational creatures are enabled and empowered to perform meritorious actions proportionate to eternal life. Fourth, after this earthly life, the re-created image can be glorified to see God face-to-face and truly and perfectly participate in God's eternal triune life. The concluding section of Chapter Seven will restate the main theological contributions of the dissertation and the theological consequences of the new perspective. I will highlight the methodological importance of interpreting Aquinas's text chronologically in the light of other texts and not taking them out of their original context.

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[58] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent*., d. 14, q. 2, a. 2: "in exitu creaturarum a primo principio attenditur quaedam circulatio vel regiratio, eo quod omnia revertuntur sicut in finem in id a quo sicut a principio prodierunt. Et ideo oportet ut per eadem quibus est exitus a principio, et reditus in finem attendatur. Sicut igitur dictum est, dist. 13, quaest. 1, art. 1, quod processio personarum est ratio productionis creaturarum a primo principio, ita etiam est eadem processio ratio redeundi in finem, quia per Filium et Spiritum Sanctum sicut et conditi sumus, ita etiam et fini ultimo coniungimur."

CHAPTER ONE

Recent Scholarship on Aquinas's Theology and Metaphysics of Grace

Several authors over the past fifty years have dealt with Aquinas's theology of grace. In this first chapter, I want to summarize briefly eight contributions, identify the debated points, and determine more precisely the *status quaestionis* for this dissertation.

I look first at Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo and his work on grace as a participation in the divine nature. Supported and informed by some of the metaphysical insights of Cornelio Fabro, Sánchez Sorondo argues against the old perspective that divides participation into formal participation and virtual participation and that tends to identify the participation in the divine nature as a formal participation. Scholastic theologians also tend to propose grace as a participation in divine operation, rather than divine being. Sánchez Sorondo proposes that analogical, supernatural participation in divine being through grace should be understood as a new way that God is present to and dwells in the rational creature.

Second, I consider Fernando Ocáriz's work on Aquinas's thought on the relationship between being of nature (*esse naturae*) and the being of grace (*esse gratiae*). Like the work of Sánchez Sorondo, Ocáriz's contribution is influenced by Fabro's metaphysics of being and participation. Ocáriz argues against the old perspective and holds that the being of grace is not another act of being (*actus essendi*) in the creature, but should be understood as a being in act (*esse in actu*) or formal being. At the same time, Ocáriz agrees with the old perspective's use of obediential potency to characterize our openness to the supernatural.

Third, I look at the arguments of Denis Bradley against the old perspective. While not concentrating directly on the metaphysical foundations of the old perspective, Bradley continually contrasts Aquinas's text with the interpretation of the commentators, such as Cajetan, Ferrariensis, and Báñez. Above all, he shows how the old perspective commentators deviated from Aquinas's text and thought.

The fourth author I consider is Stephen Long and his response to Bradley's work. Long tries to defend the old perspective by introducing a contrast between this economic order of divine providence, in which it has been revealed that human beings are ordered and called to the vision of God's essence, and other hypothetical economic orders of divine providence, in which human beings are not ordered and called to the beatific vision. He also defends the Scholastic use of the notion of obediential potency, but does not reduce it to mean "mere non-repugnance."

The fifth contribution I consider is that of Lawrence Feingold, who presents one of the most complete and vigorous defenses of the old perspective. He concludes that the interpretations of Cajetan and others are faithful to Aquinas's texts and that de Lubac's interpretation is incompatible with the text and thought of Aquinas. The key to Feingold's work is his denial that there can be a natural desire for something we cannot naturally attain. Thus, according to Feingold, the desire for the vision of God's essence is a conditional desire elicited by knowledge of God's existence and the potency we have for the vision is characterized as obediential and not natural.

The sixth author I consider is Daria Spezzano. She contributes to the new perspective through a dynamic understanding of grace as presented in Aquinas's *Summa theologiae.* She does this by considering Aquinas's thought on grace in relation to the gift of wisdom, which is a participation in the procession of the Word (Son) of God, and infused virtue of charity, which is a participation in the processsion of the Love (Spirit) of God. Throughout her work, she continually highlights the notion of participation and Aquinas's Trinitarian understanding of grace, wisdom, and charity.

The last two authors I consider in this overview are Jacob Wood and Alain Contat. Jacob Wood undertakes a chronological study of Aquinas's texts on natural desire and the natural desire to see God. In many ways he contributes to yet modifies the old perspective by saying that we have a fundamental appetite for beatitude and that desire adds to appetite a motion to the ultimate end.

In contrast to Wood, Contat argues that Aquinas's mature understanding of desire holds the key to resolving the debate about the natural desire to see God. Desire, in Aquinas's mature thought, is characterized by the lack of considering the possibility or impossibility of attaining the desired object. As well, the natural desire for the vision of

God is formally in the will and yet founded on the inclination of the intellect to its ultimate end. According to Contat, the human will naturally desires that the intellect attain its ultimate perfection and this perfection consists in the vision of God's essence.

What I believe emerges from this overview is that the way to resolve the debated points between the old perspective and the new perspective is a comprehensive, chronological, and comprehensive presentation of Aquinas's theology of grace that is informed by an authentic interpretation of his metaphysics of being and participation.

1. Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo

Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo's doctoral dissertation, which was directed by Cornelio Fabro and published in 1979,[1] explores the role of the notion of participation in Aquinas's theology of grace.[2] He begins his dissertation by tracing the Scholastic deviation from Aquinas's thought on participation and tries to determine when and how the Scholastic distinction between "formal participation" and "virtual participation" arose. He identifies Juan Vicente de la Iglesia, O.P. (1544-1595) as establishing grace as a formal participation and as having shared in the formalist tradition that forgets Aquinas's authentic notion of being (*esse*).[3] Sánchez Sorondo next considers Juan Alfonso Curiel (d. 1609), who argues that grace is not a formal participation of God as *esse per esssentiam*, but rather a formal participation of divine intellectuality.[4] Curiel seems to be the first to divide participation into formal and virtual.[5] Francisco Suárez, S.J. (1548-1617) is shown to agree with Curiel that grace is a participation in divine intellectuality.[6] Both Curiel and Suárez identify existence (*esse*) with the essence and this gives rise to

[1] Republished 2021 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

[2] In his brief presentation of the dissertation, Fabro himself writes that grace is presented as the human being's participation in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), i.e., our elevation to the mode of being and operating proper to God. See C. FABRO, "Presentación," in M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 9.

[3] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, pp. 29-39.

[4] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 39.

[5] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 46.

[6] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, pp. 44-46.

the notion of virtual participation: what is in God formally is in the created effect virtually. And so, while grace is a formal participation in the divine intellect, our existing essence is seen as a virtual participation in God's essence.

In contrast to the Scholastic division of participation into formal and virtual, Sánchez Sorondo points out that Aquinas's division of participation is notably different. In fact, it was Cornelio Fabro who pointed out that Aquinas tends to distinguish between univocal participation, where two things participate in the same form, and analogical participation, where that which has form in participative manner imitates that which essentially has it.[7] Curiel and Suárez deny that the supernatural participation of grace can be a formal participation in deiform being. This is because, for them, every formal participation demands formal predication and intrinsic realization of the same participated form in the participant subject. Curiel and Suárez reduce grace as a formal participation in divine intellectuality to a kind of univocal participation. For Aquinas, however, there is no univocal participation between creature and Creator. Aquinas posits an analogical participation between Creator and creature – apparently unknown to Curiel and Suárez – and this implies an imperfect and accidental communication of the divinity to the creature as such.[8] By defining grace as a participation in God insofar as God is intellectual, Curiel and Suárez frame grace in terms of intellectual operation and ignore those texts of Aquinas that speak about participation in divine being. For Aquinas, grace both elevates a creature to supernatural and divine being and is a principle of supernatural operation in the creature.[9] The theory of Curiel and Suárez tends to reduce creation and recreation to extrinsic causal dependence and overlook the creature's intrinsic constitution in being through creation and in divine being through recreation.

Sánchez Sorondo next considers Juan Martínez de Ripalda, S.J. (1594-1648), who, in his *De ente supernaturali*, proposes a twofold participation to explain participation in the divine nature. The first partici-

[7] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 48. THOMAS AQUINAS, *In I Sent*., d. 48, q. 1, a. 1.

[8] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, pp. 50-51.

[9] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, pp. 51-52. THOMAS AQUINAS, *In II Sent*., d. 26, q. 1, a. 3; *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 2.

pation is virtual. This is common to all creatures and concerns "participated being" (*ens participatum*). The second participation is proper to habitual grace and consists not in an intrinsic participation in the deity, but rather in an assimilation to divine goodness.[10] He holds that insofar as justified human beings participate in the divine nature, they become, by means of grace, morally good, inclined to do morally good works, and to oppose sin, especially mortal.[11] Thus, while Curiel and Suárez (and eventually Ambroise Gardiel) hold that grace is a participation in the divine nature insofar as it is intellectual, Ripalda, along with others, reduces grace to a participation in the divine nature insofar as it is free and moral.[12] According to the first theory, grace makes us participate in the divine intellectual operation; in the second, grace assimilates us to divine goodness. Having reduced grace to participation in moral perfection or in intellectual operation, both theories seem to forget Aquinas's Dionysian principle that spiritual operation is founded on spiritual being.[13]

Sánchez Sorondo argues that John of St. Thomas, O.P. (1589-1644) continues the deviation from Aquinas's thought and presents grace as a formal-univocal, objective, physical participation in God.[14] For his part, Aquinas uses "univocal participation" to speak about the participation of a species in a genus and the participation of an individual in a species and does not apply this to the relationship between the creature and Creator. Sánchez Sorondo points out that the notion of analogical participation would be more apt for the mystery of supernatural participation than univocal participation.

The Carmelite Fathers of Salamanca (17th century) dealt at length with grace as participation in the divine nature. They divide physical participation into formal and virtual and divide formal participation into univocal and analogical. They conclude that grace is a formal

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[10] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 56.

[11] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 56.

[12] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, pp. 57-58.

[13] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 2: "Dionysium in cap. II *Cael. Hier*.; ubi dicit, quod non potest aliquis habere spiritualem operationem, nisi prius esse spirituale accipiat; sicut nec operationem alicuius naturae, nisi prius habeat esse in natura illa."

[14] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 63. SEE JOHN OF ST. THOMAS, *Cursus Theologicus*, III, q. 62, disp. 24, a. 1.

and analogical participation of the divine nature as nature. Sánchez Sorondo responds to this position that Aquinas's division is between predicamental-univocal participation and transcendental-analogical participation. The transcendental-analogical participation between creature and Creator concerns not only the three extrinsic causalities (efficient, exemplar, and final) and the presence of God – in all creatures *per essentiam*; in spiritual creatures *per illapsum*; and in recreated creatures by indwelling (*per inhabitationem*) – but also the being of nature (*esse naturae*) and the being of grace (*esse gratiae*). The being of nature and the being of grace are truly intrinsic to the creature.

Having critiqued the Salamancan division of participation because it differs from that of Aquinas, Sánchez Sorondo also criticizes their inadequate distinction between supernatural participation and natural participation. He points out that according to the Carmelites, there would be several "formal participations" in the divine nature, formal participations such as participation in being (*esse*), life (*vivere*), understanding (*intelligere*), willing (*volere*), and so on. Therefore, by identifying participation in the divine nature as a formal participation the Carmelites have not really clarified what is proper to supernatural participation. Sánchez Sorondo posits that supernatural participation is distinguished from natural participation by the diverse modes of divine presence. Natural participation includes God being in all creatures by essence (*per essentiam*), by presence (*per praesentiam*), and by power (*per potestatem*) and God being in every spiritual creature *per illapsum*. Supernatural participation consists in the presence of God by indwelling (*per inhabitationem*). While natural participation is a similitude of image (*similitudo imaginis*) and does not have a distinctly divine character, the similitude of grace (*similitudo gratiae*) is a supernatural participation specified by the divinity as such.[15] As Aquinas writes: "A further effect of divine power is shown in that which belongs to grace; and he says that divine power gives deification itself, i.e. participation in deity, which is by means of grace."[16] And so the being of nature (*esse naturae*) is the gift of God by which creatures are and the being of grace

[15] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 72.

[16] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De divinis nominibus expositio*, VIII, lect. 2: "Ulterius autem effectum divinae virtutis ostendit in his quae pertinent ad gratiam; et dicit quod divina virtus dat ipsam deificationem, idest participationem deitatis, quae est per gratiam."

(*esse gratiae*) is the gift of God by which some creatures become gods by participation.[17]

Sánchez Sorondo concludes that what distinguishes supernatural participation from natural participation is not that recreation is a participation of formal-analogical imitation (the Salamancan position). This is because formal-analogical participation is common to all creatures. What is proper to supernatural participation is that in supernatural participation, the spiritual creature, as an image of God and as capable of God (*capax Dei*), is constituted in deiform being and operation.[18] The proper notion of creation is the production of the being of nature (*esse naturae*); the proper notion of recreation is the communication of the being of grace (*esse gratiae*). Sánchez Sorondo holds that because the Salamancans are closed to the Thomistic doctrine of being as act (*esse ut actus*), they fall into the same error as Juan Vicente.[19]

In the first half of the 20th century, Ambroise Gardiel, O.P. (1859-1931) proposed a fourfold division of the modes of participation and identified grace as a virtual-dynamic formal-analogical participation.[20] Sánchez Sorondo holds that Gardiel's position continues the forgetfulness of the act of being (*actus essendi*) and reduces participation to causal dependence. Gardiel also appropriates the thesis of Curiel and John of St. Thomas who emphasize grace as a participation in divine intellectuality. This is in line with those theologians who place the constitutive of the divine essence in understanding (*intelligere*) and not being (*esse*).[21] Sánchez Sorondo concludes that Gardiel is only offering a new version of the intellectualist line of thought which lost the notion of the deiform metaphysical being of grace. By reducing participation to causality and being to its operative dimension, Gardiel ignores the participation of man as image of God in divine being (*esse divinum*), which is intrinsic to the human being through supernatural re-creation.[22]

Sánchez Sorondo ends his historical overview with a section on the proposal of Antonio Piolanti (1911-2001), which holds that grace is

[17] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 73.
[18] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 75.
[19] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 76.
[20] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 79.
[21] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 82.
[22] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, pp. 82-83.

a "virtual participation."[23] Piolanti distinguishes formal and virtual participation as follows. In a formal participation, the participated act is limited by a potency. In a virtual participation the participated act is limited not by potency but rather by imitating its perfect act in a deficient manner. In the second case, the act is not reproduced formally, but only in some of its "virtualities."[24] Grace, then, for Piolanti, is a virtual participation and not a formal participation since it is an imperfect imitation of infinite Being.[25]

Sánchez Sorondo holds that Piolanti unsuccessfully tries to reconcile the old Scholastic understanding of participation, divided into formal and virtual, with Fabro's interpretation. On the one hand, Piolanti associates formal participation with being (*esse*), which is limited by diverse essences; and, on the other, he associates virtual participation with the diverse essences which limit being (*esse*). In response to Piolanti, Sánchez Sorondo points out that Aquinas himself never identifies the exemplar participation of created essences (as intensive forms) in connection to the divine ideas as a "virtual participation" and the foundational participation of beings (as intensive act) in Subsistent Being (*Esse subsistens*) as a "formal participation."[26] Sánchez Sorondo notes that Piolanti overlooks passages where Aquinas speaks of supernatural recreation, not as just as participation in a new nature, but as participation in a new supernatural being (*esse*), which, in turn, becomes the foundation of supernatural operations. Sánchez Sorondo holds that Piolanti overcomes "essentialism" to some degree by affirming the primacy of being as act (*esse ut actus*) in the natural order, but unfortunately does not extend this, as does Aquinas, to the supernatural order. Piolanti mistakenly associates grace with the creature's essence instead of its being (*esse*) and posits a virtual participation. With this view, Piolanti seems to ignore the ultimate Thomistic resolution of the intrinsic participation of man, as image of God, in divine being (*esse divinum*) through supernatural re-creation.[27]

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[23] A. PIOLANTI, "La grazia come partecipazione della natura divina," *Euntes Docete*, 10 (1957), pp. 34-50.

[24] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 83.

[25] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, pp. 83-84.

[26] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 85.

[27] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 88.

Part One of Sánchez Sorondo's dissertation (pp. 94-129) deals with the historical evolution of Aquinas's notion of grace as participation of the divine nature. Sánchez Sorondo notes that the formula "participation of the divine nature" rarely appears in Aquinas's early works. However, after his Exposition of Dionysius's *De divinis nominibus* (dated by Sánchez Sorondo to 1261), "participation of the divine nature" is the way Aquinas usually refers to grace.[28]

Part Two of Sánchez Sorondo's dissertation analyzes the implications of the theological meaning of grace as participation in the divine nature. It first compares our likeness to God as image to grace as a participated similitude of divine nature. Sánchez Sorondo writes: "grace, as participated similitude of the divine nature, implies a regeneration or recreation of the intensive intrinsic similitude of the image of creation: grace is a participation of the divine nature itself just as it is realized in the bosom of intratrinitarian life."[29] He then explores the meaning of grace in the light of adoptive filiation as intrinsic participation in the essential filiation of the Word.[30] Part Two concludes with a study of how man, as image of God (*imago Dei*), is metaphysically and existentially capable of God (*capax Dei*).[31]

Part Three of Sánchez Sorondo's dissertation studies the fundamental consequences for Christian anthropology of the notion of grace as participation in the divine nature. Grace heals the soul damaged by sin[32] and supernaturally recreates human nature to participate in a new deiform being and operation.[33] After expounding Aquinas's texts on the comparison between the being of nature (*esse naturae*) and the being of grace (*esse gratiae*), Sánchez Sorondo argues that grace perfects natural being (*esse naturale*) insofar as it adds spiritual being (*esse spirituale*).[34] In Chapter Three of Part Three Sánchez Sorondo affirms the causal role of the humanity of Christ in the conferral of grace and how a spiritual creature, recreated in divine being and operation, can be a second predicamental cause of the refusion of grace.

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[28] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 128.
[29] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 155.
[30] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, pp. 158-201.
[31] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 228.
[32] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, pp. 233-42.
[33] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, pp. 243-74.
[34] M. SÁNCHEZ SORONDO, *La gracia como participación*, p. 272.

Sánchez Sorondo's main contribution is to show that we should not read the Scholastic division of virtual participation and formal participation into Aquinas's theory on grace. Aquinas speaks about a new participation in divine being without qualifying it as virtual or formal. Furthermore, as Alain Contat points out, while the Dominican commentators (Gardeil and Garrigou-Lagrange) concentrate on the role of the accidental form of grace, Sánchez Sorondo concentrates on the being of grace (*esse gratiae*).[35] At the same time, I find that Sánchez Sorondo does not explore in-depth Aquinas's notion of *supernatural* participation as "touching by operation" (*attingere per operationem*). Furthermore, he does not explore at length the relationship between the "being of nature" and the "being of grace."[36] Alain Contat notes that Sánchez Sorondo does allude to the notion of "intensification" and suggests that the participation of the being of grace (*esse gratiae*) in Subsistent Being (*Esse subsistens*) is more intense than that of the being of nature (*esse naturae*). But on the question of the relationship between the being of nature (*esse naturae*) and the being of grace (*esse gratiae*) Sánchez Sorondo does not seem to posit a relationship of participation.[37] As far as

[35] A. CONTAT, "Réflexions sur l'ontologie de l'état de grâce et de l'état de péché," p. 176.

[36] A. CONTAT, "Réflexions sur l'ontologie de l'état de grâce et de l'état de péché," p. 177: "Mais le parallèle entre la création et la sanctification nous ramèneau cœur de l'ontologie thomasienne, c'est-à-dire à l'*actus essendi* fontal dont procède toute la perfection de l'étant. Quel rôle précis joue l'*esse* originaire de l'homme, de l'ange, ou même de l'âme séparée,dans la collation et la conservation de l'*esse gratiæ*? Sur ce point décisif, les travaux de Sánchez Sorondo restent, à notre avis, quelquepeu allusifs."

[37] A. CONTAT, "Réflexions sur l'ontologie de l'état de grâce et de l'état de péché," pp. 177-178: "L'auteur semble suggérer que non, dans la mesure où, ne clarifiant pas la nature précise de l'*esse naturæ*, il laisse entendre que celui-ci coïncide avec l'*actus essendi*, et que, par conséquent, l'*esse gratiæ* n'est pas seulement autre que l'acte d'être – ce quiest le cas de toute perfection consécutive en quelque manière à celui-ci –, mais aussi qu'il lui est étranger, en raison de sa supériorité ontologique. Dans cette hypothèse, l'*esse gratiæ* participerait directement à l'*Esse subsistens* considéré en son intimité trinitaire, mais non à l'*esse per participationem* de la personne créée, dont la *virtus* nes'étendrait pas au-delà des limites de l'essence. Cette solution présente certes l'avantage de magnifier la gratuité de la participation à la nature divine et

I can discern, the theme of participation in relation to grace and glory as *attingere per operationem* has remained largely unexplored by Thomists. The second theme, i.e., the relationship between *esse naturae* and *esse gratiae*, was taken up by our next theologian, Fernando Ocáriz.

2. Fernando Ocáriz

Fernando Ocáriz wrote his doctoral dissertation in 1969 on the theology of supernatural participation. It was published in 1972 as *Hijos de Dios en Cristo. Introducción a una teología de la participación sobrenatural*. Over the years he returned to the theme of grace in various articles and some of these were collected in *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria* (2001). In his work, Ocáriz deals with the metaphysical relationship between the "being of nature" and the "being of grace" and is, in large part, inspired by the metaphysical work of Cornelio Fabro.

In a 1974 article dedicated to the Holy Trinity and the mystery of our deification, Ocáriz begins by noting how the spiritual creature is destined to an ultimate end that exceeds its natural capacity. The spiritual creature needs an operative power proportioned to this end, i.e. a power rooted in the divine nature in which the creature participates in a new way.[38] Ocáriz explores the difference between our natural participation in being and our supernatural participation in divinity.[39] He writes: "This *donum Dei*, by which the spiritual creature is divinized (made divine by participation), reaches the very essence of the creature, up to the point that the elevation is considered, […] as re-generation, as a new creation, or as a re-creation."[40] The theological analysis of supernatural

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sa transcendance par rapport à la nature créée; mais elle court aussi le risque d'un extrinsécisme du surnaturel quinous paraît excessif, d'abord parce qu'il ne rend pas bien compte dudésir naturel de voir Dieu propre à l'esprit créé, et ensuite parce qu'ilne nous explique ni comment l'*habitus* de grâce inhère véritablement dans l'âme du juste, ni comment l'*esse gratiae* qui en résulte s'insère dans la constitution ontologique de celui-ci."

[38] F. OCÁRIZ, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, pp. 69-70.

[39] F. OCÁRIZ, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, p. 70. See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In De Divinis nominibus expositio*., XI, lect. 4: "bonitas et deitas omnibus supereminens, est causa *ipsius per se deitatis et bonitatis*, nominantes *per se bonitatem* quoddam *donum ex Deo proveniens* per quod entia sunt bona; et per se *deitatem* quoddam Dei donum, per quod aliqui fiunt participative dii."

[40] F. OCÁRIZ, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, p. 71.

participation needs to consider both the *content* of what is received in the participation and the *mode* in which this participation is realized. Exploring the content of this participation, Ocáriz speculates that there is a contrast between the natural, which refers to creation *ad extra* with respect to God, and the supernatural, which seems to refer to the introduction of the spiritual creature *ad intra* in terms of filial adoption.[41]

Ocáriz holds that supernatural participation, when considered *ex parte originis*, is not twofold (participation in the divine nature produced by grace; participation in the divine Son produced by adoptive filiation), but rather is one. However, considered *ex parte termini*, supernatural participation manifests a formal multiplicity. Ocáriz posits that divine filiation is a relation that elevates the natural relation that every creature has *ad Deum* (as First Cause and Ultimate End).[42] Furthermore, the supernatural elevation implies the infused virtues (operative habits). Through supernatural operations, the supernatural return to God is accomplished. The metaphysical root of this unity is the act of being. But this raises the question of the relationship between supernatural accidents (grace, adoptive filiation, infused virtues) and the act of being. Ocáriz writes:

> The *esse ad Deum* of the creature is founded directly on the act of being and no accidental change modifies this relation to God in its fundamental nucleus, as the act of being does not change. The novelty of the supernatural is the elevation that changes the relation of *esse ad Deum*: *esse ad Deum* becomes *esse ad Patrem in Filio*.[43]

Further on, Ocáriz holds that "through supernatural adoption we are sons of the Father in the Son through the Holy Spirit."[44]

Having established supernatural elevation as a change in relationship from "being to God" (*esse ad Deum*) to "being to the Father in the Son through the Holy Spirit" (*esse ad Patrem in Filio per Spiritum Sanctum*), Ocáriz seeks to defend the gratuitousness of the elevation and argues that, absolutely considered, the act of being of *any* creature can

[41] F. OCÁRIZ, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, p. 73.
[42] F. OCÁRIZ, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, p. 79.
[43] F. OCÁRIZ, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, p. 85.
[44] F. OCÁRIZ, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, p. 88.

be elevated to the supernatural. Ocáriz quotes Matthew 3:9 in support: "God can make sons of Abraham from these stones." Ocáriz thus opts for Cajetan's "old perspective" approach: the created spirit has an obediential potency and, for Ocáriz, has both a passive potency to receive a certain action from another (in this sense, elevation is a *pati*) and a potency to receive a perfection (in this sense, elevation is a *perfici*).[45]

According to Ocáriz, the intrinsic ordination of the creature to God as ultimate end is "intensified" supernaturally by God who, from within, effectively destines the creature to the ultimate supernatural end of intratrinitarian divine life. For Ocáriz, the being (*esse*) of the human being without grace is not to be in relation with God (even though it has a relation to God founded in creation), but, for the deified man, being is to be and to be in relation with God. He writes: "This new act of being will be manifested in the formal order by means of grace, divine filiation, and the other supernatural formalities."[46]

In an article from 1981, Ocáriz continues his study of the parallel between creation and recreation and the relationship between form (*forma*) and being (*esse*) in both: in creation, the relationship between natural form and *esse naturae*; in recreation, the relationship between grace and *esse gratiae*.[47] According to Ocáriz, *esse gratiae* (or *esse divinum* or *esse spirituale*) means formal being (*esse formale*). Grace is a certain perfection that elevates the soul to a certain supernatural *esse*.[48] For Ocáriz, form and formal being (*esse formale*) do not relate to one another as potency and act. "Form is an act (formal act), while *esse formale* is not properly a metaphysical principle, but a fact (a *factum*): the mode of being resulting from possessing a determinate form."[49] Ocáriz holds that the being of grace (*esse gratiae*) – the novelty of being in a supernatural elevation – is not an act that differs from the form of grace, but rather is the mode of being that results from possessing grace. This novelty of being consists in a mode of divine being or deiform being, i.e., in a divine life that is participation in the intimate life of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[50]

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[45] F. OCÁRIZ, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, p. 87.
[46] F. OCÁRIZ, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, p. 92.
[47] F. OCÁRIZ, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, p. 98.
[48] F. OCÁRIZ, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, p. 98.
[49] F. OCÁRIZ, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, p. 98.
[50] F. OCÁRIZ, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, p. 98.

Ocáriz notes that the parallel between creation and recreation is not total or absolute. The correspondence between being (*esse*) and form is expressed in the meatphysical formulas: form gives being (*forma dat esse*) or being follows upon form (*esse consequitur formam*). These expressions, when they refer to creation, indicate that form determines the mode of being of the creature and that the form intrinsically mediates being insofar as it receives and limits the act of being, just as a potency limits its own act.[51] However, when they refer to re-creation, Ocáriz holds that the formula "being is consequent upon form" (*esse consequitur formam*) only has the first of these two meanings, i.e., the form of grace determines a mode of supernatural being without this form mediating the act of being. Grace, as an accidental form infused by God, *is* by virtue of the act of being of nature, in the same way that every accident is by the act of being of the substance in which it inheres.[52]

Alain Contat comments that Ocáriz employs the Fabrian distinction between being as act (*esse ut actus*) and being-in-act (*esse in actu*). Based on this distinction, the formula "form gives being" (*forma dat esse*), can be understood in two ways. In one way, the soul (form) receives and limits the act of being (*esse ut actus*). In another way, the soul (form) gives the human being the being-in-act (*esse-in-actu*) of human nature. With regard to the being of grace (*esse gratiae*), Ocáriz excludes the first sense, since a second act of being cannot be added to the substance. When Aquinas writes that "the immediate effect of grace is to confer spiritual *esse*," we see that *esse gratiae* is posterior to the habit of grace and does not activate grace, and its actuality must proceed from the *esse ut actus* of the created person and makes it a participant of the Deity.[53] Contat asks: "How can it be that *esse gratiae* is actuated by the spiritual creature's *actus essendi*, which is limited and measured by human nature or angelic nature?" He notes that Ocáriz posits that the act of being itself is somehow "renewed" or recreated. In this way, divine causality disposes the *esse ut actus* of the creature to an actuation which surpasses the limits of the created essence. At the same time, Ocáriz recognizes that the act of being cannot undergo a change. Therefore, for Ocáriz, the renewal of the act of being by grace implies a

[51] F. OCÁRIZ, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, p. 99.
[52] F. OCÁRIZ, *Naturaleza, gracia y gloria*, p. 99.
[53] A. CONTAT, "Réflexions sur l'ontologie ...," p. 180.

new relation to *Ipsum Esse Subsistens*, which is no longer a relation of dependence based on causal procession from, but is a relation of Trinitarian intimacy based on introduction into Trinitarian life.[54]

While it is commendable that Ocáriz attempts to clarify the Trinitarian dimension of participation in divine being and to articulate how participation in created being (*actus essendi*) and participation in divine being through grace differ, it is unfortunate that he has recourse to the Scholastic theory of "obediential potency" to explain the difference in an attempt to clarify how spiritual creatures are ordered to the beatific vision. An important critique of the continued reliance of Thomistic commentators on "obediential potency" as mere non-repugnance to explain the relationship between human nature and grace was provided in 1997 by Denis Bradley.

3. Denis Bradley

Denis Bradley's *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good: Reason and Human Happiness in Aquinas's Moral Science* (1997) contains an important contribution to the "new perspective" with regard to the debate on the natural desire to see God.[55] Bradley argues throughout his work that Aquinas's position is that human nature naturally desires beatitude, which consists in the beatific vision of God's essence, as its end, but also that it cannot naturally attain this end. He contends that Thomi-

[54] A. CONTAT, "Réflexions sur l'ontologie ...," p. 181: "En bref, l'infusion de la grâce et de tout l'organisme surnaturel impliquerait, à l'intérieur même de l'*esse ut actus*, un rapport nou-veau à l'*Ipsum esse subsistens*, qui ne serait plus seulement un rapport de provenance et de destination causale, mais un rapport de d'intimité trinitaire."

[55] S. SANZ SÁNCHEZ – J. WATSON, "The Revival of the Notion of Pure Nature in Recent Debates in English Speaking Theology," *Annales Theologici* 31 (2017), p. 193: "Bradley's essential point in his analysis is St. Thomas's philosophical demonstration that, for man to attain ultimate human happiness, he needs the other-worldly vision of God: 'it is the only satisfying end of an intellectual nature'. There is no such thing as an ultimate, natural end, because man is only truly satisfied in the vision of the divine essence. However, at the same time, human nature does not have the capacity to attain this end. Human nature is intrinsically oriented to an end that it cannot attain."

stic commentators – like Cajetan, Ferrariensis, and Báñez – tried to explain away this paradox in a way that is inconsonant with Aquinas's own doctrine.

In Chapter Nine of his work, Bradley first shows that Aquinas upholds the possibility of seeing God for two reasons. First, because it is a revealed article of faith. Second, because there are rational (philosophical) arguments that show the appropriateness of this revealed doctrine. Only God, as universal truth and universal good, will satisfy the intellect and will of the rational creature. Human beings are able to attain beatitude because they are "capable of the vision of the divine essence."[56] They are capable of seeing God only because God supernaturally enables their intellects to be informed by the divine essence itself.[57] The gift of the beatific vision is something supernatural that God freely and gratuitously gives to those who love him. The actual bestowal of this gift, however, cannot be proven philosophically.[58] Human beings "could have been created and left to remain in a 'state of pure nature' without benefit of the supernatural gift of the beatific vision. The question remains, however, whether men would have had, in this state of pure nature, an *ultimate natural end*?"[59] Aquinas's arguments conclude that if human beings are to attain perfect beatitude, they must attain the vision of the divine essence; and, since the desire for beatitude is a "natural desire," it is somehow *possible* for men to see God.[60] Thus, the philosopher "can only argue that *if* men do not attain the vision of God, then men, lacking any possibility of attaining beatitude, are ultimately creatures made 'in vain.'"[61]

Bradley holds that Aquinas's arguments for our ultimate beatitude consisting in the vision of God's essence can be grouped into three families. The first group explores the coincidence of efficient and final causality. Since God is the efficient cause of the human intellect, the human intellect can only attain its perfection by being joined to God. If the human intellect fails to attain God by knowing the divine essence, it cannot attain its proper perfection. The second group of arguments

[56] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 5, a. 1.
[57] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 427.
[58] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 430.
[59] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 430.
[60] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 430.
[61] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 431.

attends to the nature of exemplar causality. By knowing and loving, human beings share in imperfect likeness to the divine intellect and will. Human beatitude thus resembles divine beatitude, i.e., God's own perfect intellectual possession of himself. The human intellect is thus inclined to this perfect knowledge of God. The third group looks at the ultimate fulfillment of the human desire to know. Human beings have a natural desire to attain perfect beatitude, which comes from knowing the divine essence. Since a natural desire cannot be "in vain," the conclusion follows that it is *possible* for human beings to see God. This third family of arguments does not say that the vision of God is *necessary*, but only that the vision of God is *possible* since a natural desire can never be universally frustrated. According to Bradley, Aquinas's thought is that our desire to know God is at first only implicit, submerged in the desire and knowledge of particular goods, but it arises from the nature of our will that has universal good as its object and the nature of our intellect that has universal being as its object. Bradley writes: "The range of the passive intellect, which has universal being as its object, extends beyond the capacity of the active intellect, which can only render intelligible the forms of sensible beings. If men are to attain knowledge of the divine essence, then God himself must somehow inform or immediately actualize the human intellect."[62]

After setting out Aquinas's thought on the natural desire to see God, Bradley looks at the position of three Scholastic commentators: Cajetan; Ferrariensis; and Báñez. Cajetan's guiding principle is the following: "Nature does not bestow an inclination to something, to which the total power of nature is unable to lead."[63] From this principle, Cajetan "concludes that since unaided human nature cannot attain the vision of God's essence, men cannot by nature innately desire it."[64] The elicited desire to see God, for Cajetan, is not, in fact, a natural or innate desire, but a desire *elicited* by a supernatural theological faith. Ferrariensis holds that the natural desire to see God can also be *elicited* by the metaphysical knowledge that there is a First Cause. Cajetan and Ferrariensis are making a distinction between an innate natural appetite and an elicited natural appetite and use this distinction to reread Aquinas's texts. Báñez also repudiates the idea that there can be an innate natural

[62] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 439.
[63] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 440.
[64] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 441.

inclination or desire to see God. Báñez considers the elicited desire of the will to be conditional. Bradley writes: "In denying that there is an innate natural desire to see God, these sixteenth-century Dominican commentators significantly diverged from Aquinas's own doctrine."[65] According to Bradley, the Scholastic commentators do not adequately attend to Aquinas's distinction between "will as nature" and "will as reason." As nature, the human will does have a natural appetite or an innate desire for happiness. According to Bradley, this is an innate desire and not an elicited desire[66] since this desire is antecedent to any intellectual act.[67] Bradley holds that the natural desire to see God is *implicitly* contained in the natural desire for the happiness that structures the will. There is also an *explicit* or elicited desire to know God that follows upon metaphysical knowledge and the demonstration that there is a First Cause of all beings.

At this point, Bradley asks: Does the concept of a natural desire to see God compromise the supernatural character of man's ultimate end? He argues that Cajetan, Ferrariensis, and Báñez fear that it does compromise this and that this is the reason why they blunted Aquinas's affirmations of what human beings actually desire by nature. They argued that there can be no innate or natural desire for the beatific vision because there is no natural active potency whereby man can attain such a vision. For them, the desire of the rational creature to see God corresponds not to a natural potency but to an "obediential potency" which is activated by grace. Bradley concludes that by focusing on the *explicit* or elicited desire to see God, the commentators obfuscate and ignore the

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[65] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 445.

[66] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 5, a. 8. Bradley distinguishes between the natural desire for beatitude which is done implicitly and preconsciously under the common formality of the perfect good and the conscious and explicit pursuit of some particular end or specific ends that the think is beatitude. The conscious desire for specific ends is an elicited desire. See D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 446, n. 106.

[67] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 4, a. 4 ad 2: "omnis actus voluntatis praeceditur ab aliquo actu intellectus, aliquis tamen actus voluntatis est prior quam aliquis actus intellectus. Voluntas enim tendit in finalem actum intellectus, qui est beatitudo. Et ideo recta inclinatio voluntatis praeexigitur ad beatitudinem, sicut rectus motus sagittae ad percussionem signi."

emphasis that Aquinas places on the naturalness of the desire to see God that is *implicitly* contained in our desire for happiness.[68]

Although Cajetan, Ferrariensis, and Báñez appeal to obediential potency, Bradley shows that Aquinas himself does not want to identify the potency to the beatific vision as an obediential potency, which is often associated with infused miraculous or prophetic knowledge. The reason for not applying the term "obediential potency" is that while no created intelligence has a natural capacity for supernatural prophecy, intellectual substances do have a natural capacity for the vision of the divine essence since this vision alone fulfills their natural desire to know God's essence.[69] By interjecting the concept of obediential potency into Aquinas's discussion of the natural desire to see God, Bradley holds that the Scholastic commentators not only say something that Aquinas does not say, but, more importantly, they say something that weakens Aquinas's repeated affirmations of the naturalness of the desire. Bradley points out that, for Aquinas, the desire for the vision of God is both natural and not natural.[70] Aquinas writes: "Beatific vision or knowledge is in some way above the nature of the rational soul, insofar as it is not able to attain it by its own power. In another way it is in accord with [the rational soul's] nature, insofar as it is capable of [the vision] through its nature, because it is made in the image of God."[71]

Bradley recalls that there are two series of Aquinas's texts on the natural desire to see God which at first seem to contradict each other and are not explicitly conciliated by Aquinas. The first series says without qualification that human beings have a natural desire to know the essence of the First Cause.[72] The second series states that the desire to know the divine essence is supernatural and arises from the infused theological virtues.[73] Bradley's view is that the best way to interpret these texts is that our desire to attain perfect happiness (seeing God) is

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[68] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 448.

[69] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 455.

[70] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, pp. 456.

[71] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 9, a. 2 ad 3: "visio seu scientia beata est quodammodo supra naturam animae rationalis, inquantum scilicet propria virtute ad eam pervenire non potest. Alio vero modo est secundum naturam ipsius, inquantum scilicet per naturam suam est capax eius, prout scilicet ad imaginem Dei facta est."

[72] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 3, a. 8.

[73] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In III Sent*., d. 23, q. 1, a. 4 sol. 3.

a natural desire, but that perfect happiness cannot be naturally attained by us and our natural powers alone. The desire to see God is natural not in the sense that all men explicitly know that God is their final end, but in the sense that knowing God is the only way to satisfy our desire for happiness. Thus, the desire to see God is *implicit* in our desire for perfect beatitude.[74]

According to Cajetan, however, there is no natural desire to see God's essence since the desire cannot be naturally realized.[75] Bradley argues that Cajetan's dichotomy – between a natural potency that can naturally attain its object and an obediential potency that is activated by supernatural grace – should not be superimposed on Aquinas. Cajetan's dichotomy does not encompass what Aquinas thought to be human nature's unique openness to God. For Aquinas, the desire to see God is both natural and supernatural. Human beings naturally desire a beatitude that they cannot naturally acquire.[76] For Aquinas, this unique natural desire is fulfilled not because human nature necessitates that God does not frustrate it, but because God freely and lovingly chooses to bring the nature he has created to fulfillment. This conviction – that God has actually ordained human beings to a supernatural end – sustains Aquinas's unhesitating affirmation that the natural desire to see God is not in vain.[77] The vision of God is somehow possible for rational creatures, because their desire for it is not in vain. In one sense, the possibility of seeing God is simply grounded in an intellectual nature's openness to universal being and goodness. In the other sense, the possibility of seeing God is not grounded in human nature at all since human beings are utterly impotent to fulfill this desire. The possibility of fulfilling the desire is solely due to divine grace. The desire to see God is natural because the vision of God is the implicit terminus of the natural desire for beatitude.[78] Bradley writes: "Before this mysterious Thomistic conception of a human nature naturally open and supernaturally elevated to God which therefore does not vainly desire to see him, and a God who freely shows himself to man and thereby fulfills a natural human desire,

[74] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 459.
[75] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 460.
[76] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 464.
[77] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 468.
[78] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 469.

Cajetan, Ferrariensis, and Báñez, and a host of other commentators, hesitate."[79] The commentators, unlike Aquinas, attempt to protect the generosity of God by confining it to what Aristotle said about human nature. "Accordingly, they transform what Aquinas took to be the universal, spontaneous, implicit, pre-cognitive desire to see God, the desire that determines the intrinsic finality of an intellectual nature, into the particular, explicit, cognitively elicited desire either of a believer (Cajetan) or of a metaphysician (Ferrariensis and Báñez). In the process, the commentators resolve the paradox built into Thomistic human nature by denying that a strictly natural desire to see God exists."[80]

After reviewing the reasons why the commentators employed the notion of obedential potency to deny the natural desire to see God, Bradley looks at the introduction of the hypothesis of pure nature to protect the utter gratuitousness of grace and the beatific vision. Bradley holds that it was in response to the condemnation of Baius (1513-1589), that scholastic theologians introduced the hypothesis of pure nature in an attempt to clarify and emphasize the gratuitous and supernatural character of man's elevation. They held that hypothetically human beings could have been created in a state of pure nature, in which state they would have had a natural end alone and not a supernatural one.[81] These theologians held that human beings retain this natural end in the present supernatural economy: accordingly, to know God is the natural end of human beings; but this knowledge does *not* arise from any natural desire to see the divine essence. The desire to see God's essence, according to this anti-Baianist position, is exclusively supernatural.[82]

Bradley notes that Aquinas does acknowledge that, in a state of pure nature, human beings cannot attain the beatific vision.[83] It is possible that God could have created and, presumably, have left human beings in a state of pure nature. This possibility is a corollary of the supernatural character of the beatific vision. While this corollary is the hypothesis of certain modern theologians reacting negatively to Baius,

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[79] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 470.

[80] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, pp. 470-71.

[81] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 471.

[82] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 471.

[83] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In II Sent*., d. 28, q. 1, a. 1; d. 29, q. 1, a. 1; *De ueritate*, q. 24, a. 14; *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 109, a. 4.

the same hypothesis of pure nature enjoys no such importance for Aquinas.[84] Aquinas affirms the gratuitousness of man's supernatural elevation and, at the same time, never puts into abeyance the divine generosity. Aquinas, according to Bradley, never argues that men *de facto* have or ever have had a strictly natural ultimate end. Christian faith affirms that in the actual order of creation and redemption, human beings have only one, actual, ultimate, and supernatural end: the vision of the divine essence.[85]

Bradley then considers the problem of Aquinas's thought on the souls of infants who die without baptism as this is used by some to deny an innate natural desire to see God.[86] Bradley recalls Aquinas's two main texts on the issue. The first, *In II Sent*., d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, proposes that these souls know about the beatific vision but feel no sorrow at their lack of this vision. The second, *De malo*, q. 5, a. 3, proposes that these souls could be in a state of supernatural ignorance about the glory that the saints possess and feel no sorrow because they do not have supernatural knowledge about the good they lack.[87] In the end, Bradley implies that these hypothetical souls do not suffer but also that they would not be fully satisfied unless they see God.[88]

Leaving aside the question of the fate of unbaptized infants, Bradley returns to Aquinas's account of perfect happiness. The human being, while in this world, naturally desires perfect happiness (beatitude) which can only be found in the vision of God. As human beings *naturally* and *explicitly* seek perfect beatitude, they *implicitly* desire to see God while yet in this world. The vision of God, however, is not a naturally attainable end. Only God, in a gratuitous act of love that infinitely transcends the capacity of human nature, can elevate the human mind to the vision of the divine essence.[89]

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[84] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 475.

[85] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, pp. 475-76.

[86] See especially THOMAS AQUINAS, *De malo*, q. 5, a. 3.

[87] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 477.

[88] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 478: "But the question remains, however one balances Aquinas's texts, how any intellectual substance, including the separate soul of an unbaptized infant, can be fully satisfied until it 'sees God'?"

[89] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 480.

While Bradley shows that Cajetan's theory substantially and seriously departs from Aquinas's teaching, he does not seem to dwell on the distinction between the natural *desire* to see God and the natural *appetite* to see God or on the distinction between the natural desire of the will for the vision and the natural inclination of the intellect to the vision. I would argue that tracing the development of these distinctions in Aquinas's texts will help conciliate the two series of texts that Bradley and others have discerned. Both Jacob Wood and Alain Contat have dealt with the distinction between a natural desire and a natural appetite. They do so, however, in different ways. Wood points to the distinction in Aquinas's early texts in relation to Aquinas's contemporaries. He holds that the natural appetite is more fundamental than the natural desire, and that the natural appetite, as a passive capacity, does not actively seek the vision of God.[90] Wood holds that the early Aquinas identifies a natural ordering to and appetite for the vision of God, but denies a natural desire for it.[91] Adding motion to an appetite or inclination transforms it into a desire.[92] For his part, Contat looks to Aquinas's mature texts and notes how a desire is "without the consideration of the possibility or impossibility" of attaining the desire object. According to Contat, some of Aquinas's texts seems to deny a natural *appetite* for the beatific vision, while others affirm a natural *desire* for that same vision.[93]

Before looking at the contributions of Wood and Contat, it is important to review the work of Steven Long and Lawrence Feingold,

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[90] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 156: "In his discussion of love, Thomas explains that an appetite is a passive power, ordered toward an act, which requires the presence of an appetible object in order to be actualized. Thomas distinguishes an 'appetite' from a 'desire' (*desiderium*), because a desire is an appetite which has been actualized and set in motion, but which has yet to attain its object."

[91] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 178.

[92] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 217.

[93] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre … (I)," p. 402: "Pour bien cerner le problème, il faut remarquer dès maintenant que les textes affirmatifs utilisent le substantif *desiderium* et le verbe *desiderare*, au lieu que les textes négatifs recourent au verbe *appetere*, à l'exception notable de la déclaration du *Scriptum* que nous avons citée. Une solution exégétiquement et doctrinalement correcte devra donc tenir compte de cette différence lexicale, puis l'expliquer."

who each contribute to the old perspective. Long responds to Bradley's thesis in an article and argues in favor of the old perspective and the use of the notion of obediential potency and the theological hypothesis of pure nature. Feingold proposes an interpretation largely in line with Cajetan's thought and argues at length against Henri de Lubac.

4. Steven Long

Steven Long's first defense of the classical approach or old perspective is found in his article, "Obediential Potency, Human Knowledge, and the Natural Desire for God," (1997).[94] Three years later, Long responded to Bradley's work in his article "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End for Man: A Response to Denis Bradley."[95] Long summarizes Bradley's position as follows: 1) we have an implicit natural desire for supernatural beatitude; 2) human nature is radically unfulfilled if it does not attain supernatural beatitude, 3) natural beatitude does not satisfy our natural desire for beatitude; and 4) obediential potency is a creature's susceptibility to miraculous divine action and should not be used to characterize our ordering to supernatural beatitude.[96] Long's response to Bradley is divided into six sections.

In the first section, Long defends the old perspective that interprets Aquinas as holding that human nature only has an obediential potency for divine grace. Long does not characterize "obediential potency" as mere non-repugnance, but rather defines it as "the passive potency of a nature in relation to an extrinsic active agency."[97] He holds that while a stone does not have an obediential potency to perform specifically human acts, the human soul does have an obediential potency for the supernatural gift of divine friendship.[98] With divine aid, human nature is capable of supernatural beatitude. Without divine aid, human nature is not capable of attaining supernatural beatitude, but does retain

[94] S. LONG, "Obediential Potency, Human Knowledge, and the Natural Desire for God," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 37 (1997), pp. 45-63.

[95] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End for Man," *The Thomist* 64 (2000), pp. 211-237.

[96] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 212.

[97] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 213.

[98] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 214.

the remote capacity to be aided by God.[99] Long holds that the obediential potency of human nature to grace is founded upon the intellective and volitional powers of human nature. He concludes that there is an obediential potency in the human being that answers to divine omnipotence and renders the human being apt to receive a life which surpasses infinitely the capacities of human nature.[100]

In the second section, Long takes issue with Bradley's view that only the vision of God can perfectly fulfill human nature and that human nature would be in vain in an order of providence that lacks supernatural fulfillment.[101] To respond to Bradley's view that human beings have a natural appetite to know God "from the start," Long proposes looking more in depth at the natural desire for God.

In the third section, Long says that the natural desire for God is either elicited or is natural. If elicited, the desire is consequent to knowledge of the existence of God as cause of all finite beings. If natural, the desire proceeds from the very nature of the will (*voluntas ut natura*) and does not require elicitation by way of knowledge.[102] For Bradley, the natural desire is natural and not elicited because it is implicit in the universal good which is the object of our will. As Bradley writes: "the natural desire to see God is *implicitly* contained in the necessary desire for the perfect good or happiness that structures the will, or in the necessary desire, which follows upon the nature of the intellect, to know in general the cause of any known effect."[103]

In responding to Bradley's view that all human beings have a natural non-elicited desire for the beatific vision, Long emphasizes that the elicited desire is a natural desire and not a supernatural desire for God. For Long, this means that the elicited natural desire desires to know God as "cause of these effects" and is not a desire for "supernatural beatitude." Once we are enlightened by divine revelation and the light of grace, we become aware that the object of the elicited natural desire to know the divine essence of the cause of all things is included within the object of the graced appetite for the beatific vision of the triune God. "[T]his second graced appetite for beatific vision proceeds,

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[99] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 216.
[100] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 218.
[101] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 218.
[102] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 221.
[103] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, pp. 445-446.

not from mere natural evidence, but from the active agency of God upon the soul through supernatural grace."[104] The second counterpoint of Long is that he thinks that Bradley's view that the desire for God follows from the will as nature (*voluntas ut natura*) robs the divine good of its perfection and transcendence. For Bradley, the desire for the vision of God is implicit in the natural ordering of the will to the universal good. Long holds that this is erroneous because it places God within the universal good instead of seeing the full perfection of the good residing in God.[105] For Long, the human desire for the intelligible good-in-general is not an implicit desire for supernatural beatitude nor is it a precognitive desire of the will antecedent to an intellectual act. The will, according to Long, is an appetite that follows intellective form, is ordered to the intelligible good, and, apart from the intellect, exhibits no tendency whatsoever.[106] Long concludes from this that the desire for the intelligible good-in-general bears the natural impress of our knowledge and the formal object of the will is conveyed to it by the intellect.[107] For Long, then, the natural desire for the intelligible good-in-general is not naturally identical with nor does it naturally include the divine good. Only under God's active agency are we brought to the graced desire for the divine good. Thus, for Long, our natural ordering to the intelligible good-in-general constitutes an obediential potency for the supernatural vision of God, but "is not a positive desire for supernatural beatitude apart from its elevation and illumination by grace."[108]

In section four, Long takes up Bradley's argument that since the natural desire cannot be vain, it must be susceptible of fulfillment. Long's view is that the naturally elicited desire seeks to know God as cause of these effects and is not a desire for the "intrinsically supernatural beatific vision." Apart from grace, the elicited natural desire is only a conditional desire whose satisfaction is not owed to nature.[109] By faith, Long holds, the conditional desire is elevated to unconditionality. Apart from revelation, Long concludes, we do not know what we seek by the conditional and elicited natural desire. Divine revelation teaches

[104] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 223.
[105] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," pp. 223-224.
[106] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 225.
[107] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 225.
[108] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," pp. 225-226.
[109] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," pp. 226-227.

us to hope for the supernatural beatific vision and, in this way, the natural desire "partakes of the supernatural finality without which, in this order of providence, human nature would be vain. Thus, from being inefficacious and conditional, the natural desire is elevated to become an unconditional aspiration."[110] For Long, we can posit a different economic order of providence within which human nature is not ordered by grace and the failure to fulfill the natural desire to know the essence of God would not derogate from the felicity or happiness of the natural end. He writes: "Within an economy of providence wherein nature were not ordered by grace, the natural desire for God would be known to be utterly disproportionate with nature, not owed to nature, and indeed impossible for nature by itself."[111] Neither the fact that the will cannot be satisfied by a finite good nor the natural elicited desire implies the impossibility of a natural end lesser than knowledge of the divine essence.[112] Long holds that the incapacity of the will to be quelled by finite goods is simply the condition for human achievement of any perfection. The end proportioned to human nature is imperfect. "Hence the supernatural vision of God 'exceeds the proportion of human nature because the natural powers are not sufficient for attaining, or thinking, or desiring it.'"[113] Long concludes that neither the elicited natural desire to know God nor the natural ordination of the will toward the intelligible good-in-general constitute an actual desire for supernatural beatific vision apart from grace and revelation.[114]

In section five, Long holds that when Aquinas says that human beings need grace lest they have been created "in vain," Aquinas is only speaking of this actual order of providence. Long's position is that: "Within *this* order, surely nature if deprived of grace would be vain."[115] For his part, Bradley does acknowledge that Aquinas does speak a few times of a regimen of pure nature as a "corollary of the supernatural character of the beatific vision."[116] Bradley knows that the actual offering and bestowal of the gift of the beatific vision as well as the actual

[110] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 227.
[111] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 228.
[112] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 228.
[113] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 228.
[114] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 229.
[115] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End...," p. 229.
[116] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 475.

attainment of the vision cannot be proven philosophically. Human beings could have been created and left to remain in a state of pure nature without the benefit of the supernatural gift.[117] Long insists that in *this* economic order of providence, no natural end could finalize human beings. The question, however, arises: what about in a different economy of providence? Long answers that in a state wherein human nature is not further ordered to grace, then the end proportioned to human nature – the natural contemplation of God – remains a true felicity and genuine end. "[N]atural felicity is imperfect only relative to an end utterly disproportionate to human nature that we cannot even rise to desire apart from grace."[118] In this economic order, the end proportionate to human nature is assumed and further ordered toward the felicity of the supernatural end. In a different economic order, the end proportionate to human nature could hypothetically constitute a "genuine end."[119] In the latter order, humanity would not be unfulfilled without the beatific knowledge of God's essence. Long argues that this is because the possibility of the beatific vision is indemonstrable from natural evidence.[120] Long holds that: "Lacking any positive apprehension of the real possibility of perfect finality, and existentially focused upon God's actual providential articulation, the human person within the regime of pure nature would discern the good as framed rather than obscured by the limits of human nature."[121] For Bradley, "natural beatitude in any form does not satisfy man's natural desire for beatitude."[122] For Long, without supernatural revelation, man is ignorant of the capability of attaining supernatural beatitude. Long concludes: "natural felicity or imperfect beatitude would indeed constitute true ends within a different economy of providence, proportionately perfecting those aspects of the human person whose perfection is naturally knowable (in precision from grace), and which are due to nature."[123]

At the beginning of section six, Long summarizes his proposal: although the end proportioned to human nature is imperfect vis-à-vis

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[117] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 430.
[118] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End ...," p. 231.
[119] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End ...," p. 232.
[120] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End ...," p. 233.
[121] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End ...," p. 233.
[122] D. BRADLEY, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good*, p. 513.
[123] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End ...," p. 233.

supernatural beatitude, it does not follow that this imperfection would vitiate enjoyment of the natural end or render it vain. He reiterates that obediential potency is not "mere susceptibility to transmutative miracle, but a specific range of actuation to which a given nature is susceptible given divine aid. Obediential potency is the potency of a specific nature to actuations possible only with the help of God and through receiving that which God alone distinctively can give."[124] According to Long, our capacity for God pertains to our human nature but is not the realization of human nature.[125] For Long, grace orders human nature to an end that infinitely transcends the most profound philosophic contemplation of human finality.[126]

It might be helpful at this point to summarize in a chart the two views of Denis Bradley and Steven Long, both of whom present their interpretations as faithful to Aquinas's thought.

Steven Long (Old Perspective)	**Denis Bradley (New Perspective)**
We have a specific obediential potency for the vision of God. In the case of the human being, our obediential potency to the vision is the potency of our nature to actuations possible only with the help of God.	Our natural desire for the vision of God should not be characterized as an obediential potency. This is because an obediential potency is proper to what is susceptible to a miracle and our justification is not a miracle.
The natural desire for the vision of God is a naturally elicited desire. The will has no pre-cognitive tendency to the intelligible good-in-general.	Only the vision of God can fulfill our human nature. The desire proceeds from the will as nature and is more fundamental than the elicited desire.

[124] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End ...," p. 234.
[125] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End ...," p. 234.
[126] S. LONG, "On the Possibility of a Purely Natural End ...," p. 235.

The desire of the will for the good-in-general is conveyed to it by the intellect and is not an implicit or positive desire for supernatural beatitude.	Our natural desire for the universal good implicitly contains the desire for the vision of God's essence.
The non-vanity of the natural desire only means that it is a conditional desire proper to this order of providence and that its satisfaction is not owed to human nature. Therefore, because there are other possible economic orders of providence, one cannot demonstrate philosophically the possibility of the beatific vision from the non-vanity of the natural desire.	The natural desire for the vision of God cannot be in vain and thus the existence of the natural desire means it is possible that human beings can attain the vision of God.
In another economic order of providence, natural beatitude could be the final end that satisfies our human nature.	The notion of pure nature – that God could have created human nature without grace – is a corollary of the supernatural character of the beatific vision. The possibility of pure nature does not prove that the beatific vision is not our ultimate end, but only that the vision of God's essence and the gift of grace is gratuitous.

As an initial critique of Long's interpretation, I would first point out that Long's use of obediential potency differs from that of Cajetan. In Cajetan, obediential potency is characterized as mere non-repugnance. For Long, an obediential potency is a potency in the creature that can be actuated by God. De Lubac and Bradley were responding to the idea that obediential potency means non-repugnance, not that God alone is the agent that can actuate the potency to the beatific vision.

What Long's view does not seem to account for is Aquinas's use of "natural order" and "natural inclination." In the *Compendium theologiae*, for example, Aquinas does contrast a *natural* potency that can be reduced to act by a connatural agent with an unnamed potency that cannot be reduced to act by a connatural agent.[127] Other texts of Aquinas do refer to a second passive potency in creatures as a "potency of obedience" or "obediential potency."[128] However, the characteristic of the second passive potency is not qualified as "non-repugnance." What is characteristic of the passive potency is that the agent that reduces the potency to act is not a connatural agent. Aquinas proposes that our passive potency to the beatific vision is unlike a natural passive potency insofar as it cannot be actualized by a connatural agent. It can only be actuated gratuitously by God, the First Agent. At the same time, it is a potency that is naturally ordered to an act. The second potency in question is ordered to the act of seeing God's essence. So, in one way the second potency is not natural insofar as it cannot be reduced to act or actuated by a connatural agent. However, in another way the second potency is natural insofar as there is a natural order to, a natural inclination toward, and a natural desire for the act that corresponds to the potency. Thus, while Long's view of obediential potency attempts to improve on Cajetan's non-repugnance view, it does not fully capture Aquinas's thought on the order of the potency of the human intellect to the act of the beatific vision.

A second critique regards Long's view of the will. Long holds that the human will is in no way pre-cognitively inclined to the intelligible good-in-general. Against Long's interpretation, the work of Alain Contat argues that the desire to see God is virtually included in the natural and pre-cognitive inclination of the will to the good of the intellect, which itself is naturally inclined to its ultimate end – to see the essence of God.

A third critical point concerns Long's interpretation of the non-vanity of the natural desire. For Long, the non-vanity only demonstrates that the possibility of the beatific vision is proper to this economic order of providence and not to all possible orders of providence. In another economic order of providence, he hypothesizes, human beings could be

[127] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Compendium theologiae*, I, ch. 104.

[128] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In III Sent.,* d. 3, q. 1, a. 3 ad 4; *De ueritate*, q. 29, a. 3 ad 3.

created without this natural desire. This position of Long is not Aquinas's position. When Aquinas speaks about a state of pure nature, he is speaking about the theological hypothesis that our first parents could have been created without grace. Aquinas does not posit, though, that if they were created without grace, then they would not have a natural desire for the beatific vision. An attentive reading of the *Summa contra Gentiles* shows that Aquinas does not place any conditions on his affirmations about every intellectual substance: the ultimate end of every intellectual creature is the vision of God's essence.[129] In Aquinas's thought, the hypothesis of a state of pure nature – the hypothesis of our first parents being created without grace – aids our understanding that the gifts of grace and glory are utterly gratuitous. Even though we naturally desire the vision of God's essence, in no way does God owe us grace or glory. The non-vanity of the natural desire is used by Aquinas to demonstrate that the vision of God's essence is possible to the rational creature and not that the vision is actually offered to us or that we will actually attain it. In contrast to Long, Aquinas does not use the hypothesis of the creation of spiritual creatures without grace to posit another economic order of providence in which human beings do not naturally desire the beatific vision as their ultimate end.

Fourth, Long introduces a distinction between an elicited desire to know the essence of the ultimate cause of the effects we experience and a supernatural desire to know intrinsically the triune God. Now, while Aquinas does make a distinction between our natural desire to know the essence of God and our supernatural hope for the beatific vision, Aquinas does not seem to employ Long's distinction with regard to the object of the natural desire and the object of supernatural hope. The infused virtue of hope does not change the desired object. What supernatural hope adds to the natural desire is the certainty of attainment and the certainty of divine aid to attain it. Thus, while our desire does not consider the possibility or impossibility of attaining the desired good, the infused virtue of hope does consider this and gives the certainty of attaining the desired arduous good. For Aquinas, then, we can distinguish between: 1) an implicit pre-cognitive natural desire of the will that the intellect attain the vision of God's essence; 2) a natural inclination of the intellect to the vision of God's essence; 3) an explicit

[129] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 59: "visio divinae substantiae est ultimus finis cuiuslibet intellectualis substantiae."

naturally elicited desire of the will for the vision of God's essence; 4) an explicit desire of the intellect for the vision of God's essence; and 5) a supernatural hope for the vision of God's essence. While the relation of the subject to the object and the foundation of the relation are distinct, the object, in all of these, is not different.

Aquinas's theological hypothesis of unbaptized children in limbo is that the children do not suffer. According to Aquinas's mature thought, one possible reason for their lack of suffering is that although they have the natural desire for the vision of God, they are ignorant of the *attainability* of the beatific vision. And so, even though they know that God could elevate them to the vision of his essence in some fashion, their ignorance of the possibility of attaining the vision and actual offer of the vision means they do not suffer. This solution is generally not considered by the old perspective which uses the hypothesis of limbo to qualify our natural desire for the beatific vision as a conditional desire.

In his attempt to defend the old perspective, Long deviates notably from Aquinas's thought. Aquinas speaks of all intellectual creatures, without qualification, as having a natural desire for the vision of God, all intellectual creatures having a natural capacity for grace,[130] created intellects as having a potency to attain their ultimate end that can be reduced to act by a supernatural first agent,[131] and created intellects as having a natural inclination to their ultimate end which is unattainable by their natural powers alone.[132]

For his part, Long speaks of an elicited desire to know the essence of the cause of all things, a natural order to a proportionate natural end, an obediential potency that can be actuated to render a human being apt for eternal life, and a conditional desire that is not in vain in this economic order of providence. For Aquinas, the role of grace is to *sufficiently* order human nature to its ultimate end; for Long, the role of grace in this economic order of providence is to order human nature beyond their natural end to a supernatural end.

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[130] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 113, a. 10: "iustificatio impii non est miraculosa, quia naturaliter anima est gratiae capax."

[131] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Compendium theologiae*, I, ch. 104.

[132] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Boethii De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4 ad 4.

Thomas Aquinas	Steven Long
The ultimate end of all intellectual creatures – without qualification – is the vision of God's essence. All intellectual creatures naturally desire this ultimate end.	In this order of providence, intellectual creatures can have an elicited natural desire to see God.
Human beings have a twofold end: they can attain their connatural end by their own natural powers; their ultimate end is attainable only by the gift of divine grace, for which human beings have a natural capacity.	In this order of providence, all rational creatures are naturally ordered to their proportionate natural end.
All created intellects have a passive potency for the beatific vision that can only be actuated gratuitously by God.	In this order of providence, intellectual creatures have a specific obediential potency that can be actuated by God to render a creature apt for eternal life.
All intellectual creatures are naturally inclined to their ultimate end which consists in the vision of God.	In this order of providence, the inclination to the vision of God is conditional.
Grace sufficiently orders a human being to glory.	In this order of providence, grace orders a human being to supernatural beatitude.

One of the keys to Long's interpretation is his continual use of "this economic order of providence." He holds that while our natural desire to see God is proper to this order of providence, it is not proper to all possible orders of providence. With this he intends to preserve the utter gratuitousness of the bestowal of grace. I find it curious that the old perspective defenders depend so heavily on theological hypotheses such as other hypothetical economic order of providence, the hypothesis of pure nature, and the hypothesis of limbo.

It is true that Aquinas distinguishes between two ends for the rational creature. However, he does not seem to consistently qualify both as *ultimate* ends. The new perspective interprets Aquinas's texts to hold that we have an imperfect penultimate connatural end attainable by our natural powers and a perfect ultimate supernatural end meritoriously attainable by the gratuitous gift of divine grace and the infused virtues. Our imperfect and penultimate end (that is naturally attainable) is ordered to the perfect and ultimate end (that is supernaturally attainable). Aquinas does not distinguish between an order of providence in which the beatific vision is not the ultimate end of human beings and this order of providence in which the beatific vision is our ultimate end. He distinguishes between the hypothesis in which our first parents were not created in grace and this actual order in which they were created in grace. Aquinas does not affirm simply that grace orders a human being to the vision of God, but almost always qualifies it to say that grace *sufficiently* orders human nature to the vision. We are naturally and insufficiently ordered and inclined to the vision by our nature.

5. Lawrence Feingold

Lawrence Feingold's doctoral dissertation on *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (2001^1; 2010^2) argues that our natural desire to see God is not an innate and unconditional desire, but rather a conditional desire that is elicited by knowledge of God's existence.[133] We will consider Feingold's work in four points: first, Feingold's brief presentation of Aquinas's texts; second, Feingold's presentation and critique of de Lubac's thought; third, Feingold's counterproposal; and, fourth, the critique of Feingold's interpretation.

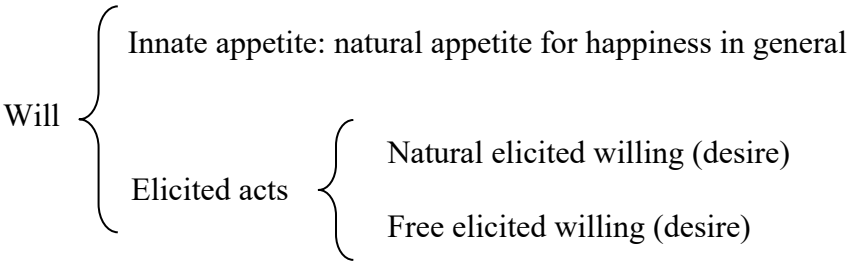
5.1 Feingold on Aquinas

In Chapter One, Feingold presents his view of Aquinas's thought on the twofold end of human beings. On the one hand, we have a *natural* or *connatural* end that corresponds to the natural perfection of our rational powers. And, on the other, we have a *supernatural* end

[133] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. xxiii.

that absolutely transcends the limitations and proportionality of our nature, but is made possible by the gratuitous light of glory.[134]

Chapter Two of Feingold's work determines that the natural appetites of the intellect and will are tendencies or inclinations toward their proper objects, and that these are naturally ordered and proportioned to these objects.[135] The two faculties of intellect and will each desire their objects in two ways: 1) either as the object of the innate natural appetite or natural inclination of the power (potency) – and this is an unconscious tendency of the potency for its proper and fitting or proportionate act; or 2) insofar as the object is known to be a good for the creature – and this is an elicited and conscious desire.[136] In an elicited act of desire, what was previously *not* desired is now actually desired due to the knowledge of the goodness of the object and it is this knowledge that draws out – i.e., elicits – an act of desire from the sensitive or rational appetite.[137] Feingold then applies this distinction to the will. On the one hand, the will has a natural appetite for its natural end which is its happiness. On the other, however, in the presence of knowledge, the will also has specific acts or movements of elicited desire toward the goods apprehended by the intellect.[138] Feingold then divides the elicited acts of the will into two types: natural elicited willing without deliberation (*voluntas ut natura*) and free elicited willing following on deliberation (*voluntas ut ratio*).[139] Graphically, Feingold's division can be represented as follows:



[134] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 1.
[135] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 14.
[136] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 14.
[137] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 15.
[138] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 15.
[139] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 17.

Having established these distinctions, Chapter Three identifies the natural desire to see God as a naturally elicited desire of the will. For Feingold, all of St. Thomas's texts "show the existence of a *naturally elicited* desire of the will following upon knowledge."[140] Feingold's five conclusions are as follows. First, all of Aquinas's texts on the natural desire to see God derive this desire from the dynamism of our natural desire to know. Second, "[t]he natural desire to see God is a naturally elicited desire of the will, which spontaneously seeks the perfection of the intellect."[141] Third, once "we grasp the existence of God, we naturally, without any deliberation, desire to know His essence."[142] Fourth, by considering the existence and mystery of God, we spontaneously and necessarily wonder what and who God is. Fifth, although Aquinas does not specify whether the natural desire to see God is conditional or unconditional, Feingold holds that the desire is a conditional movement of the will in persons who do not yet possess the infused theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity.[143]

Chapters Four through Thirteen cover the history of thought on the natural desire to see God. Feingold looks at John Duns Scotus, Denis the Carthusian, Cardinal Cajetan (chapters 6-8), Ferrariensis, de Soto, de Toledo, de Medina, Báñez, Suárez, and Jansenius.

5.2 Feingold on Henri de Lubac

In Chapter Fourteen, Feingold summarizes Henri de Lubac's interpretation of the natural desire to see God, which holds – contrary to Feingold's interpretation – that our natural desire is not a conditional desire elicited by knowledge of God's existence. For de Lubac, man, as he concretely exists today, has only one end – the vision of God.[144] The natural desire to see God does not necessarily belong "to intellectual

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[140] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 34.

[141] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 44. See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 10, a. 1: "Non enim per voluntatem appetimus solum ea quae pertinent ad potentiam voluntatis; sed etiam ea quae pertinent ad singulas potentias, et ad totum hominem. Unde naturaliter homo vult non solum obiectum voluntatis, sed etiam alia quae conveniunt aliis potentiis, ut cognitionem veri, quae convenit intellectui."

[142] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 44.

[143] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 44.

[144] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 297.

nature as such, but only to our *concrete* human nature that is 'called.'"[145] Feingold notes that Henri de Lubac opposes the idea that our supernatural destiny is something "super-added" by God above and distinct from a "natural end" to which our nature would be directed in virtue of its own intrinsic principles.[146] For de Lubac, we have a natural appetite not just for beatitude in general, but also for the particular object – the vision of God – in which our beatitude actually consists.[147] According to de Lubac, the elicited desire to see God manifests the existence of an underlying innate appetite for the vision of God, which is the fundamental desire of spiritual nature itself.[148] The innate desire is an absolute and inefficacious desire and not a conditional one.[149] De Lubac proposes that the existence of the natural desire is a *datum* of faith and not an acquisition of reason and proves both the possibility of the vision and also the fact that God will grant it to us.[150] He defends the gratuitousness of grace and glory arguing that nothing can be due from God to the creature.[151] De Lubac does not think that the denial of a state of pure nature or the affirmation of an innate and unconditional appetite for the vision of God endangers the gratuitousness of grace or implies that the granting of the vision would be owed to human nature.[152] For de Lubac, the possibility of a state of pure nature is irrelevant to the gratuitousness of the supernatural and so he advocates a new approach, based on the oneness of man's final end.[153]

In Chapter Fifteen, Feingold argues that de Lubac's interpretation is incompatible with Aquinas's doctrine. He begins by noting that he does not see how to reconcile de Lubac's affirmation that we are

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[145] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 296.

[146] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 299.

[147] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 300.

[148] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 302. See H. DE LUBAC, *Surnaturel*, pp. 433-34.

[149] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 305.

[150] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, pp. 307-308.

[151] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 312: "It is God who *freely* imprints the desire on man, and therefore its fulfillment clearly remains gratuitous, like all God's works in creation."

[152] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 296.

[153] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 313.

"ordered" to our supernatural end by grace[154] with the other aspects of de Lubac's interpretation. According to Feingold, the form of grace is added to human nature so that it can be *fittingly* ordered to an end that is above human nature. Human nature in itself cannot be *fittingly* ordered to an end that is above human nature without grace.[155] For Feingold, the supernatural finality is imprinted or inscribed upon our being by sanctifying grace and the infused virtues received in the sacrament of Baptism and is not something that belongs to our nature itself. Feingold concludes that de Lubac and Aquinas present two completely different models of how our nature is ordered and inclined to its supernatural end. Feingold writes:

> For St. Thomas, the nature itself is intrinsically ordered and inclined sufficiently only to its connatural end. It is ordered and inclined to our supernatural end through "super-added" principles: grace and the theological virtues. For de Lubac, our nature is intrinsically finalized and inclined exclusively to our supernatural end in virtue of the imprinting of a supernatural finality on the soul in the moment of its creation. Nothing need be superadded to the concrete nature to give it this "determination" to a supernatural end and the corresponding natural desire. Superadded principles are necessary only with regard to the means to attain this end. In other words, for de Lubac, sanctifying grace

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[154] H. DE LUBAC, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, pp. 110-11: "The desire itself is by no means a 'perfect appetite'. It does not constitute as yet even the slightest positive 'ordering' to the supernatural. Again, it is sanctifying grace, with its train of theological virtues, which must order the subject to his last end; at least, it alone can order him 'sufficiently' or 'perfectly', or 'directly'. This grace is a certain 'form', a certain 'supernatural perfection' which must be 'added over and above human nature' in order that man 'convenienter ordinetur in finem' [See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 150: "Sed finis in quem homo dirigitur per auxilium divinae gratiae, est supra naturam humanam. Ergo oportet quod homini superaddatur aliqua supernaturalis forma et perfectio, per quam *convenienter* ordinetur in finem praedictum."]

[155] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 318. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 150: "Ergo oportet quod homini superaddatur aliqua supernaturalis forma et perfectio, per quam *convenienter* ordinetur in finem praedictum."

> should be conceived as "super-added" to our nature only insofar as it renders us properly disposed and capable of achieving the end which was already somehow inscribed in our nature prior to the gift of grace.[156]

While Henri de Lubac connects our natural desire to see God to the term "natural inclination,[157] Feingold holds that Aquinas teaches the opposite: "the *natural inclination of our will* (prior to the reception of sanctifying grace) *is directed toward our connatural* end, and not toward our supernatural end."[158] Feingold concludes that de Lubac's deviation from Aquinas on this point consists in supposing that natural inclination is directed to the actual final end and not to the end proportionate to our nature. According to Feingold, Aquinas never refers to the natural desire as a natural inclination and cites several texts in support.[159]

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[156] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, pp. 322-23.

[157] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 324. See H. DE LUBAC, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, p. 111: "If therefore the desire is truly a 'natural inclination', it is not by that fact a 'sufficient' or 'proportionate' inclination; it does not desire its object 'sufficienter'; or in other words, as in the case of free will left to itself, so this desire is unable to strive 'suitably' or 'efficaciously'; to put it yet another way, it is not the source of any 'sufficient activity which would make it, however minimally, of itself 'a certain inchoative possession.'"

[158] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, pp. 324-25.

[159] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 325. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 62, a. 2: "Naturalis autem inclinatio voluntatis est ad id quod est conveniens secundum naturam. Et ideo, si aliquid sit supra naturam, voluntas in id ferri non potest, nisi ab aliquo alio supernaturali principio adiuta." *De uirtutibus*, q. un., a. 10: "per spem autem et caritatem acquirit voluntas quamdam inclinationem in illud bonum supernaturale ad quod voluntas humana per naturalem inclinationem non sufficienter ordinatur." *In III Sent*., d. 27, q. 2, a. 3 ad 5: "secundum doctrinam fidei ponitur finis ultimus naturalem inclinationem excedens." *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 62, a. 3: "virtutes theologicae hoc modo ordinant hominem ad beatitudinem supernaturalem, sicut per naturalem inclinationem ordinatur homo in finem sibi connaturalem." *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 2: "Sed est aliquis finis ad quem homo a Deo praeparatur, naturae humanae proportionem excedens, scilicet vita aeterna,

Feingold also recalls de Lubac's introduction of a contrast between our concrete and historical human nature, which is finalized to the vision of God, and an abstract or generic human nature, which can be imagined without this finality. For de Lubac, the imprinting of a supernatural finality is gratuitous and not implied in the creation of a spiritual nature. At the same time, de Lubac does not conceive our concrete, historical nature as the *addition* of a supernatural finality, but rather holds that our ordering to the supernatural occurs in the nature itself as it concretely exists. In contrast, Feingold holds that we are ordered

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quae consistit in visione Dei per essentiam, quae excedit proportionem cuiuslibet naturae creatae, soli Deo connaturalis existens. Unde oportet quod homini detur aliquid, non solum per quod operetur ad finem, vel per quod inclinetur eius appetitus in finem illum, sed per quod ipsa natura hominis elevetur ad quamdam dignitatem, secundum quam talis finis sit ei competens: et ad hoc datur gratia; ad inclinandum autem affectum in hunc finem datur caritas; ad exequendum autem opera quibus praedictus finis acquiritur, dantur aliae virtutes." *De ueritate*, q. 14, a. 3 ad 9: "Ideo autem a theologis (ponuntur) quaedam virtutes circa finem ipsum, non autem a philosophis, quia finis humanae vitae quem philosophi considerant, non excedit facultatem naturae: unde ex naturali inclinatione homo tendit in illud; et sic non oportet quod per aliquos habitus elevetur ad tendendum in illum finem, sicut oportet quod elevetur ad tendendum in finem qui facultatem naturae excedit, quem theologi considerant." *De spe*, q. un, a. 1 ad 8: "bonum proportionatum movet appetitum; non enim naturaliter appetuntur ea quae non sunt proportionata. Quod autem beatitudo aeterna sit bonum proportionatum nobis, hoc est ex gratia Dei; et ideo spes, quae tendit in hoc bonum sicut proportionatum homini ad habendum, est donum divinitus infusum." *De caritate*, q. un, a. 1: "Actus igitur qui excedit totam facultatem naturae humanae, non potest esse homini voluntarius, nisi superaddatur naturae humanae aliquid intrinsecum voluntatem perficiens, ut talis actus a principio intrinseco proveniat." *In III Sent*., d. 23, q. 1, a. 4, qa. 3: "Unde per naturalia tantum homo non habet sufficienter inclinationem ad illum finem; et ideo oportet quod superaddatur homini aliquid per quod habeat inclinationem in finem illum, sicut per naturalia habet inclinationem in finem sibi connaturalem: et ista superaddita dicuntur virtutes theologicae ex tribus."

to our supernatural finality by the reception of sanctifying grace through Baptism.[160]

Feingold points to the opposing views of de Lubac and Cajetan on "obediential potency." The Thomistic tradition holds that intellectual nature is *naturally* open to being elevated to a supernatural end by grace; De Lubac holds that human nature is not just open but already intrinsically determined, finalized, or called to a supernatural end prior to the reception of sanctifying grace (although supernatural principles must be added for the realization of that end).[161] According to the first (Thomistic) view, the connatural end of happiness is open to being further ordered through grace to a supernatural end of the beatific vision.[162] Feingold holds that although our human nature is not intrinsically ordered to perfect beatitude and is ordered only to an imperfect beatitude, a perfect beatitude consisting in the vision of God is tremendously fitting to our nature and is naturally desired with a conditional natural desire elicited by knowledge of God's existence.[163] Feingold holds that Aquinas and even de Lubac himself reject the position that nature itself is naturally ordered to the vision of God.[164]

Feingold argues that de Lubac's identification of a natural desire (*voluntas ut natura*) with an imperfect, inefficacious, and absolute (unconditional) desire is incompatible with Aquinas's identification of per-

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[160] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 336: "For St. Thomas, our intrinsic supernatural finality is the result of an *accidental* form (sanctifying grace), given through *Baptism* and justification. For de Lubac, our supernatural finality is *essential* to our ('concrete') nature and given in the *creation* of our nature itself."

[161] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 342.

[162] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 343. See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 62, a. 7 ad 3: "Cognitio autem et dilectio naturalis ordinantur ad cognitionem et dilectionem gloriae."

[163] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 343.

[164] Feingold points to de Lubac's *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, p. 111. I assume he is referring to this text: "[The desire] does not constitute as yet even the slightest positive 'ordering' to the supernatural." However, if one continues reading the paragraph, de Lubac affirms that there is a natural inclination to the vision of God, but that this inclination is not a sufficient and proportionate inclination.

fect willing with absolute willing and of imperfect willing with conditional willing (wish or *vellitas*).[165] For Feingold, an innate appetite can only be unconditional and perfect. He points to Aquinas's *In III Sent*., d. 17, q. 1, a. 2, qa. 1 (a question about Christ's will) and Aquinas's analysis of the movements of the "will as nature" (*voluntas ut natura*). For Aquinas, these movements are conditional unless they concern the final end itself. Feingold proposes that "the natural desire for happiness in general is not conditional, whereas the natural desires for life, health, and knowledge remain conditional until they are ratified by the deliberated will."[166] From this, Feingold concludes that since the natural desire to see God is a desire for *knowledge* of the essence of the first cause and is not directly a desire for *happiness*, it must be a conditional and not an absolute desire. He writes:

> In order for the vision of God to be willed absolutely, there must first be a deliberation by which it is judged to be practically attainable and ordered to the realization of happiness. In addition, an absolute or efficacious willing of the vision of God necessarily presupposes the aid of divine grace. Thus an absolute or unconditional desire for the vision of God will not be natural but supernatural.[167]

To further the argument of the incompatibility between Aquinas's teaching and the interpretation of de Lubac, Feingold invokes Aquinas's teaching that the souls in limbo, who do not see God, do not suffer spiritual pain due to this deprivation.[168] According to Aquinas's early *Scriptum*, these souls know that they are deprived of the beatific vision, but they do not suffer because, even though they naturally desire

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[165] Feingold refers to the following texts: *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 13, a. 5 ad 1; III, q. 21, a. 4; *De malo*, q. 16, a. 3 ad 9; *In III Sent*., d. 17, q. 1, a. 2, qa. 1; *In IV Sent*., d. 43, q. 1, a. 4, qa. 1 ad 2.

[166] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 346.

[167] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 346.

[168] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In II Sent*., d. 33, q. 2, a. 2 ad 2: "quamvis voluntas sit possibilium et impossibilium, ut in 3 Ethic. dicitur; tamen voluntas ordinata et completa, non est nisi eorum ad quae quis aliquo modo ordinatus est: et si in hac voluntate deficiant homines dolent; non autem si deficiant ab illa voluntate quae impossibilium est, quae potius velleitas quam voluntas debet dici: non enim aliquis illud vult simpliciter; sed vellet, si possibile foret."

the vision, their desire is not an "ordered and complete willing." This type of willing only concerns those objects apprehended as possible to obtain. Their desire to see God is more properly a wish (*velleitas*) than a willing, since the object of this desire is seen to be impossible to them and completely disproportionate. Thus, no sorrow results if this natural desire is not satisfied as long as the deprivation was not caused by their own fault. Aquinas's mature teaching on the souls in limbo is found in *De malo*, q. 5, a. 3. Feingold interprets this text as impossible to reconcile with de Lubac's teaching.[169] In this text, Aquinas holds that the souls of infants who die without Baptism would not suffer from being deprived of the vision of God, because they would be ignorant of it. According to Feingold, these souls do not suffer because their natural desire is a conditional one whose frustration causes no suffering.[170] In Feingold's opinion, this manifests the contradiction between de Lubac's interpretation and Aquinas's teaching. Feingold reiterates how he thinks de Lubac equates what Aquinas separates: our absolute and innate natural desire for happiness in general (generated by the nature of our will) and our conditional and elicited natural desire for the vision of God (generated by knowledge of God's existence).[171]

With regard to whether or not reason can demonstrate that all intellectual creatures have a natural desire to see God, Feingold argues that de Lubac's interpretation once again contradicts Aquinas's teaching. De Lubac proposes that this is a truth of faith and not demonstrable from the analysis of our natural desire to know.[172] Feingold criticizes de Lubac for holding that the existence of the natural desire, according to the axiom that a natural desire cannot be in vain, proves not

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[169] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, pp. 351-52: "In the later treatment of this same question in *De malo*, q. 5, a. 3, St. Thomas no longer makes the assumption that the souls in limbo would not be ignorant of the beatitude of which they are deprived. However, the principles used in the earlier article, such as the notion of *velleitas*, are not repudiated. Furthermore, the later article is equally impossible to reconcile with the interpretation of de Lubac."

[170] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 352.

[171] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, pp. 353-54. Feingold proposes that a perfect, unconditional, and efficacious desire for the vision of God is the effect of the theological virtue of hope.

[172] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, pp. 354-56.

only that the vision of God is possible but that the vision of God will be offered.

5.3 Feingold's Proposal

In Chapter Sixteen, Feingold summarizes his arguments against an innate and unconditional appetite for the vision of God. Feingold first reiterates his position that all of Aquinas's texts show the existence of an *elicited* and imperfect natural desire that follows on knowledge of God's effects and not the existence of an *innate* and unconditional desire which would be prior to and independent of any such knowledge.[173] For Feingold, our innate appetite is only directed to an object or good that is proportionate to our nature.[174] Our elicited natural desires are not limited in the same way since, by knowing our limitations, we can desire to transcend them.[175] Accordingly, by knowing our ignorance about the essence of the first cause, we naturally desire, conditionally and inefficaciously, to transcend that natural limitation.[176] According to Feingold, Aquinas consistently denies the existence of a sufficient "natural inclination" for our supernatural end and affirms the existence of a sufficient "natural inclination" for our connatural end. In a footnote, Feingold does acknowledge that *In Boethii de Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4 ad 5 is the textual exception[177] but also that the text should be interpreted with Ferrariensis as affirming a natural inclination to beatitude in general.[178] I do not see how this important text can be interpreted in this way as it speaks clearly about our being naturally inclined by our nature to our ultimate end that is only attainable by grace and not by nature.

According to Feingold, Aquinas consistently denies an innate and absolute inclination or appetite for the vision of God and asserts the existence of an elicited and imperfect natural desire for the vision. Feingold denies that an innate inclination can be insufficient, and so he proposes that because an elicited natural desire can be conditional and im-

[173] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, pp. 397-98.
[174] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 401.
[175] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 402.
[176] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 402.
[177] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 407, n. 29.
[178] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 399, n. 6.

perfect, it does not constitute a sufficient natural inclination. In Feingold's view, we are not ordered by nature to the vision of God but only by grace and the theological virtues.[179] Since there is no natural inclination to the vision of God and, therefore, no natural passive potency that can be naturally reduced to act, our potency to the beatific vision is best characterized as a "specific obediential potency," which does not generate an innate appetite.[180] Our natural appetite, according to Feingold, can be directed simultaneously to two final ends: our supernatural end is desired with an elicited and imperfect (conditional) natural desire; our connatural end is desired with an innate and unconditional appetite. Grace transforms the elicited and conditional natural desire into a supernatural inclination.[181] Feingold proposes that the object of innate appetite can never be gratuitous.[182] As well, the possibility of a state of pure nature rules out an innate appetite for the vision of God.[183] Feingold concludes that since the natural desire to see God is conditional, then there is a need for the theological virtue of hope and the souls in limbo do not spiritually suffer due to the lack of the realization of an unconditional natural desire.[184]

In his conclusion, Feingold posits that the natural desire to see God is intermediate between the innate inclination for our connatural end and the supernatural acts and habitual inclinations of hope and charity. Thus, he distinguishes four states of the desire for God:

[1] An innate desire for our con-natural end – to know and love God through the mirror of creation – follows from the very nature of our spiritual faculties.
[2] A natural desire for the vision of God's essence elicited by knowledge of God's existence.
[3] An elicited and unconditional desire for the vision of God made possible by knowledge of God's promise in Revelation and the aid of actual grace. Such as desire is an act of theological hope, which presupposes faith.

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[179] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 410.
[180] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, pp. 413-14.
[181] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 423.
[182] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, pp. 423-24.
[183] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, pp. 424-26.
[184] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, pp. 427-28.

[4] A supernatural habitual inclination for the vision of God resulting from sanctifying grace and consisting in the theological virtues of hope and charity. This inclination is unconditional.[185]

5.4 Criticism of Feingold's Proposal

As noted by Santiago Sanz Sánchez and John Watson, since the publication of Feingold's dissertation there has been abundant support both for de Lubac and for Feingold.[186] On the one hand, I agree with Feingold that de Lubac's interpretation of Aquinas contains several errors. First, there is de Lubac's introduction of a distinction between an abstract human nature not called to the beatific vision and our concrete, historical human nature which is called to the vision of God's essence. I will argue that the natural desire to see God follows as a property of human nature and that this position does not deny that hypothetically God could, in another order of providence, create a human being without *ordering* and *calling* them to the beatific vision.[187] Second, I disagree with de Lubac that the natural desire to see God is an article of

[185] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 433.

[186] S. SANZ SÁNCHEZ and J. WATSON, "The Revival of the Notion of Pure Nature in Recent Debates in English Speaking Theology," *Annales Theologici* 31 (2017), pp. 212-226.

[187] I recognize that this position – that the natural desire for the vision of God follows as a property of human nature – seems at first to be difficult to reconcile with the pronouncement of *Humani generis*: "Alii veram 'gratuitatem' ordinis supernaturalis corrumpunt, cum autument Deum entia intellectu praedita condere non posse, quin eadem ad beatificam visionem ordinet et vocet." [Others destroy the gratuity of the supernatural order, since God, they say, cannot create intellectual beings without ordering and calling them to the beatific vision]. There are several points to consider. The first question regards the historical and theological influence of Garrigou-Lagrange in the papal pronouncement. Second, the view that the natural desire to see God follows as a property of human nature does not destroy the gratuitousness of the supernatural order. An intellectual creature can desire the beatific vision without God *sufficiently* ordering it to the vision and calling them to that same vision. Alain Contat's work recovers an overlooked aspect of Aquinas's mature thought on desire, which is without consideration of the possibility or impossibility of

faith and not demonstrable by reason. I will argue, in agreement with Thomas Aquinas, that the natural desire is demonstrable by reason. And, third, I disagree with de Lubac that the existence of the natural desire proves not only the possibility of the beatific vision but its actual offer. I hold, in agreement with Thomas Aquinas, that the possibility of the vision, but not the actual offer of the vision, can be demonstrated by way of reason.

On the other hand, I believe that many of Feingold's arguments against our natural inclination to the vision of God are due to a grave misinterpretation of Aquinas's texts. Rupert Mayer, for example, argues against Feingold by employing a key text from Aquinas's *Expositio super Boetium de Trinitate* as the title of his contribution: "man is inclined to his ultimate end naturally, though he cannot naturally attain it, but only by grace."[188] As I will mention at the end of Chapter Three, this

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attaining the desired object. Thus, the natural desire for a good object does not oblige God to fulfill it. Aquinas concludes philosophically from the existence of the natural desire that the beatific vision is *possible* and not that it is actually given. Third, the encyclical does not qualify "ordering." In his mature work, Aquinas consistently distinguishes between the natural and insufficient order the beatific vision by nature and the sufficient order to the beatific vision by grace and the infused virtues. Thus, God could hypothetically create an intellectual being, which is naturally ordered to the beatific vision, but is not called to the beatific vision and is not sufficiently ordered to that same vision. In this case, "ordering" and "calling" – as used in the encyclical – can be considered as divine acts with different effects. It is possible that one could say that all intellectual beings – in any order of providence – are naturally ordered or inclined to the beatific vision, but not all intellectual beings are *called* to the beatific vision. In other words, there hypothetically could be an order of providence in which human beings naturally desire the beatific vision and are naturally ordered to it, but are not *called* to it. For Aquinas "vocation" and "justification" as used by Paul in Romans 8:30 are the execution of predestination (*Summa theologiae*, I, q. 23, a. 2). As well, Aquinas, in his commentary on Ephesians 1:11-12, he emphasizes the gratuitousness of the call. We are not called to glory by our own merits but by divine choice or election. In Aquinas's thought, ordering a created nature to its ultimate end is part of God's eternal providence; *calling* that created nature to the ultimate end is a temporal execution of divine predestination.

[188] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In Boetii De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4 ad 5: "Quamvis enim homo naturaliter inclinetur in finem ultimum, non tamen potest

text can be situated in between Aquinas's *De ueritate* and his *Summa contra Gentiles* and represents an important milestone in the development of Aquinas's thought on the argument. In the text from his *expositio*, the ultimate end to which nature is inclined naturally is not the imperfect, connatural end, but rather the vision of God, as this is attainable only by grace.[189]

According to Mayer, Aquinas posits a real but *insufficient* ordering of human nature to its ultimate end, i.e., the vision of God. Grace and the infused virtues *sufficiently* incline man to the beatific vision: "Hence, the natural desire to the beatific vision may exist in man as an insufficient desire for the last end, even though the human nature is not naturally proportioned to the vision of God and has no active force to attain that end."[190] Mayer argues against Feingold that Aquinas does not distinguish between a natural appetite and a naturally elicited act in the way the later tradition understood it. "The inclination to the good follows upon the human form and is not an elicited act of the will due to knowledge."[191] Feingold himself admits that we do not find a clearly defined distinction between innate and elicited desires in Aquinas's texts.[192] Mayer concludes that, according to Aquinas's thought, there is

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naturaliter illum consequi, sed solum per gratiam, et hoc est propter eminentiam illius finis."

[189] Feingold notes that this text is the exception (*The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 407, n. 29).

[190] R. MAYER, "Man is Inclined to His Last End by Nature…," p. 913, n. 93.

[191] S. SANZ SÁNCHEZ and J. WATSON, "The Revival of the Notion of Pure Nature in Recent Debates in English Speaking Theology," p. 232-33.

[192] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 396: "St. Thomas himself does not distinguish between elicited and innate desire through clearly defined terms, as became common beginning with Suárez. […] St. Thomas normally uses 'natural desire' (*desiderium naturale*) to signify a conscious elicited natural desire, and 'natural appetite' (*appetitus naturalis*) or 'natural inclination' to indicate an underlying innate appetite. However, his terminology is variable, and context is crucial. In the case of the natural desire to see God, the context is given by the fact that a desire to know the first cause is said to be aroused by *prior knowledge* of God's effects, and to manifest itself as wonder. Therefore, the texts of St. Thomas only show the existence of an *elicited* natural desire – following on knowledge of God's effects – and not an

an insufficient ordering to the beatific vision by our nature and also that we cannot sufficiently determine the desire for beatitude without the help of grace.[193]

Edward Oakes contends that Feingold's argument and interpretation of Aquinas's thought relies on the existence of limbo.[194] Feingold holds that the only way to reconcile the natural desire to see God with the lack of spiritual suffering of souls in limbo who do not see God is to posit that the natural desire is conditional. I would counter that there are other ways to interpret Aquinas's thought on this point. One way is to distinguish between knowledge of the possibility of the vision and knowledge of the accessibility of the vision. On the one hand, these souls know that they have been created for beatitude, have natural knowledge of the *possibility* of the beatific vision, understand the created concept of the beatific vision, and even know that it is the object of their natural desire. On the other hand, they do not suffer because they do not have knowledge of the *accessibility* of the beatific vision, nor of what the beatific vision truly is in itself (as the saints in glory and the angels have). In any case, I would truly hesitate before using the theological hypothesis of souls in limbo as conclusive evidence that Aquinas thinks that the natural desire to see God must be conditional. Aquinas himself does not conclude that the natural desire for the vision of God is conditional from the non-suffering of souls in limbo, but merely concludes that the natural desire for the vision does not cause them to suffer. As we will see in the work of Alain Contat, Aquinas holds that a desire does not consider the possibility or impossibility of attaining the desired object. Thus, while these hypothetical souls have natural knowledge of the possibility of the beatific vision and a natural desire for it, their lack of supernatural knowledge of the accessibility of the vision, i.e., the possibility of attaining the vision, means they do not suffer. They naturally desire the vision, but they do not supernaturally hope for it. Hope,

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innate desire which would be prior to and independent of any such knowledge, and thus as blind and unconscious as a rock's tendency to fall."

[193] R. MAYER, "Man is Inclined to His Last End by Nature…," p. 936.

[194] E. OAKES, "The Surnaturel Controversy: A Survey and a Response," *Nova et Vetera*, English edition, 9 (2011), pp. 625-656. See p. 639: "there can be no question that Feingold's attack on de Lubac, as well as his defense of the commentary tradition, directly entails, at least for him, the existence of limbo."

we will see, adds to desire the possibility and the secure expectation of attaining an arduous good.

Against Feingold's approach, which invokes many of Aquinas's texts on how grace orders a human being to their ultimate end, more attention, in my opinion, should be given by Feingold to the actual words used by Aquinas to characterize and qualify the ordering to the vision by grace. Aquinas uses both *convenienter*, usually translated as "fittingly," and *sufficienter* to characterize both the ordering of nature by grace and the inclination of the intellect and will by the theological virtues. This means that we can posit an inclination by nature, as Aquinas does in *Super Boethium De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4 ad 5, which is not a sufficient or fitting or proportionate inclination, because our soul and natural powers by themselves are unable to perform meritorious actions proportionate to our ultimate end, i.e. the vision of God's essence.

As regards the texts cited by Feingold as proof that Aquinas holds that there is no natural inclination to the beatific vision, I argue that the text from *Super Boetium de Trinitate* (q. 6, a. 4 ad 5) is not an exception,[195] but rather holds the key to the interpretation of the other texts. If we are very attentive to development of Aquinas's thought, the context of each of Aquinas's text and the precise words used by Aquinas, every text listed by Feingold as proof of his thesis actually admits of a different interpretation. In this light, the text from *De uirtutibus*, q. un, a. 10, does not deny that there is a natural inclination to the supernatural good, but states that the human will is not *sufficiently* ordered by the natural inclination to the supernatural good. One could counter that in *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 62, a. 2, the text does not deny the natural inclination to the ultimate end, but rather says that the will cannot be brought (*ferri*) to its ultimate end without grace and the infused virtues and that there is no *motion* (*motus*) of the will toward beatitude unless the will is moved by a supernatural agent and the help of grace.[196] The

[195] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, pp. 406-407, n. 29: "One apparent exception to this series of texts is *In Boet. De Trin.*, q. 6, a. 4 ad 5."

[196] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 62, a. 2: "Naturalis autem inclinatio voluntatis est ad id quod est conveniens secundum naturam. Et ideo, si aliquid sit supra naturam, voluntas in id ferri non potest, nisi ab aliquo alio supernaturali principio adiuta. […] Unde nulla creatura rationalis potest habere motum voluntatis ordinatum ad illam beatitudinem, nisi mota a supernaturali agente. Et hoc dicimus auxilium gratiae."

text of *In III Sent.*, d. 27, q. 2, a. 3 ad 5 simply states that the ultimate end exceeds the natural inclination, and this leaves open the possibility that the ultimate end exceeds the natural inclination not insofar as it is not the object of the natural inclination, but insofar as the natural inclination is not sufficient to produce meritorious actions proportionate to the ultimate end. Regarding *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 62, a. 3, Aquinas is not denying our natural inclination to supernatural beatitude, but is making a comparison between the sufficiency of our natural inclination to our connatural end and the sufficiency of the ordering to our ultimate supernatural end by the theological virtues. *De ueritate*, q. 27, a. 2 states that the ultimate end exceeds the proportion of human nature, but does not deny that there is a natural and insufficient inclination to the beatific vision. Grace is given gratuitously by God to elevate human nature and, in the light of the text from *Super Boethium de Trinitate*, charity is given to *sufficiently* incline his will to our ultimate end and the other virtues are given so that human beings can carry out the meritorious works by which the ultimate end is acquired. *De ueritate*, q. 14, a. 3 ad 9 can be interpreted according to the difference between having a natural inclination to the end and actively tending to the end. Thus, we have a natural inclination to the beatific vision, but we do not actively and sufficiently *tend* to the beatific vision without grace and the theological virtues. With regard to *De spe*, q. un, a. 1 ad 8, we can distinguish, in Aquinas's mature texts, between our natural *desire* and our natural *appetite*: while we have the natural desire for eternal beatitude, we do not naturally seek (*appetuntur*) eternal beatitude because it is not proportionate to our appetite. Eternal beatitude is proportioned to us by the grace of God. The theological virtue of hope is that virtue by which we *tend* toward this good. As well, *De caritate*, q. un, a. 1 does not deny a natural inclination to the beatific vision, it argues rather that *to perform an act* that exceeds the *facultas* of human nature, the will needs the infused virtue charity as an intrinsic perfection and principle. Aquinas's *In III Sent*., d. 23, q. 1, a. 4, qa. 3 affirms that without the theological virtues we do not have a *sufficient* inclination to the beatific vision, but does not deny that we have a natural inclination to that same vision.

Feingold himself recognizes that it is difficult to harmonize his interpretation of Aquinas's reasoning with other aspects of Aquinas's doctrine.[197] Feingold lists five difficulties:

[197] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, p. 45.

[1] If grace and the theological virtues are necessary for us to properly desire our supernatural end and to have a sufficient natural inclination and ordination to it, then in what sense is the *natural* desire to see God a natural desire?
[2] Aquinas states that our supernatural end is above the power of natural reason, yet his argument from the natural desire to see God seems to provide a demonstration of our supernatural end.
[3] How can there be a natural desire for an object that exceeds what is due our nature? Aquinas seems to imply that the vision of God is our "natural" end and that anything lower would be insufficient.
[4] Since we naturally desire beatitude (happiness in general), but do not naturally desire the particular object in which our beatitude lies, how can there be a natural desire specifically to see God?
[5] Aquinas does not address the relationship between the natural desire to see God and the theological virtue of hope.

I hold that the apparent contradictions discerned by Feingold arise not because Aquinas did not address them, but due to Feingold's misinterpretation of Aquinas' thought. As regards the first difficulty listed by Feingold, the difficulty arises because Feingold does not allow for a natural and insufficient inclination to the beatific vision. For Feingold, every natural inclination has to be sufficient to attain its object. As regards the second difficulty, Bradley's work shows that Aquinas's rational demonstration concludes to the *possibility* of the beatific vision and that Aquinas's argument is that the beatific vision is the only end that would satisfy us as rational creatures, but that Aquinas does not conclude rationally to the *actual bestowal* of grace, the theological virtues, and the beatific vision. As regards Feingold's third difficulty, Aquinas does argue that the vision of God is the end of our nature, but not our natural end. The texts of Aquinas show there can be a natural desire for and insufficient inclination toward that which exceeds the *facultas* of our nature because our human nature is naturally capable of grace (*capax gratiae*). This means that our nature and powers are capable of being elevated and sufficiently inclined by grace and the theo-

logical virtues so that we can perform meritorious operations proportionate to our ultimate end. As regards Feingold's fourth difficulty, I would say that rather than posit that we are sufficiently inclined by nature to happiness in general and insufficiently inclined by knowledge of God's existence to the vision of God's essence, Aquinas's texts can be interpreted to say that we *explicitly* desire happiness (beatitude) and *implicitly* desire the beatific vision, since this is what our happiness, as rational creatures created in the image of God, essentially consists in. As regards Feingold's fifth difficulty, Aquinas's texts, such as *Quaestiones disputatae de spe*, q. un, a. 1, do in fact distinguish desire from hope. One major distinction between desire and hope, pointed out by Alain Contat, is that while desire does not attend to the consideration of the impossibility or possibility of attaining what which is desired, hope adds to desire the secure expectation of attaining an arduous good.[198]

As I mentioned earlier, it is my intention to interpret Aquinas's theology of grace in a metaphysical, contextualized, comprehensive, and chronological fashion. In particular, Aquinas's texts on the natural desire for the vision of God and our natural inclination to our ultimate end should not be divorced from their context and especially the related themes of divine providence and divine predestination. As well, we need to be attentive to the role of grace and the infused virtues and to what Aquinas actually says they do: grace proportions and *sufficiently* orders human nature to its ultimate end; the infused virtues *sufficiently* incline the powers of intellect and will to the beatific vision and proportion them to perform meritorious actions.

Feingold's view is that we are: 1) innately and unconditionally inclined to a connatural end by nature; 2) conditionally inclined to a supernatural end by knowledge; and 3) sufficiently inclined to the supernatural end by grace and the theological virtues.

My reading of Aquinas is the following, we: 1) are naturally and insufficiently inclined to our ultimate end – the vision of God's essence

[198] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De spe*, a. 1: "Differt tamen spes a desiderio in duobus. Primo quidem, quia desiderium est communiter cuiuscumque boni, et ideo attribuitur concupiscibili: spes autem est boni ardui, quod difficile est assequi, et ideo attribuitur irascibili. Secundo, quia desiderium est alicuius boni absolute, absque consideratione possibilitatis et impossibilitatis illius; sed spes tendit in aliquod bonum, sicut in id quod est possibile adipisci: importat enim in sui ratione quamdam securitatem adipiscendi."

– by our nature but we cannot attain this end by our natural powers alone; 2) insufficiently desire the vision of God's essence elicited by knowledge of the existence of God; and 3) are sufficiently inclined to that same end and can merit that end by the gratuitous gift of grace and the infused virtues. My reading does not deny that we have an imperfect connatural end attainable by our natural powers, but recognizes that this connatural end – i.e., metaphysical knowledge of God as cause – cannot satisfy our natural desire for beatitude, which consists in the beatific vision of God's essence.

6. Daria Spezzano

Daria Spezzano's dissertation, published in 2015, is an in-depth examination of Thomas's mature teaching in the *Summa theologiae* on deification, i.e., the graced movement of the elect toward God. She characterizes the grace movement of deification as follows: "In this journey of transformation, the human creature is both conformed to and moved by the Trinitarian divine exemplar, the source of both its creation in a rational nature and its re-creation by grace through the divine missions."[199] Throughout her exposition, Spezzano highlights the respective sanctification roles of the virtue of charity, a created participation of the Holy Spirit, and the gift of wisdom, by which the soul is assimilated to the Son. She writes: "Deification by grace constitutes the elect as God's adopted children, called to share in the fellowship of beatitude. Charity and wisdom, flowing from grace, transform the powers of adopted children so as to enable them to attain that goal."[200]

Spezzano holds that Aquinas is committed to "vision of God's loving and sapiential ordering of predestined human beings to communion with himself, by a progressive participation in the divine likeness and activity, which accounts for both the absolute primacy of divine causality in all of its modes and the fullness of graced human freedom."[201] She seeks to understand Aquinas's thought on the function of grace in the sanctification and progressive likening of the rational creature to God. She notes that there is a significant evolution in Aqui-

[199] D. SPEZZANO, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 3.
[200] D. SPEZZANO, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 4.
[201] D. SPEZZANO, *The Glory of God's Grace*, pp. 5-6.

nas's works toward "an increasingly dynamic understanding of the integrated roles of divine and human action in the movement of grace human beings to beatitude."[202] Aquinas's mature teaching stresses "God's manifold causality as end, mover, and exemplar in the plan of divine providence to bring rational creatures to communion with himself."[203] Human beings are made to the image of God insofar as they are created with intellect and will. Like God, human beings are the principle of their own activity. God, as the source of their free activity, works through their very freedom to bring them to the end ordained for them in divine providence. To reach the supernatural end of beatitude the human person must be deified.[204]

In Chapter One, Spezzano considers the divine source and end of the *imago Dei*. She concludes that some rational creatures are predestined by God to reach eternal life. These are the elect, who, as creatures, participate in God's being and likeness, are "further transformed by the gift of grace to share by participation in God's own inner life of knowledge and love through assimilation to the divine Persons."[205] Their intellects and wills are transformed and they are moved with God's help along the path to glory, "where they can possess and enjoy God in fullness, attaining their perfection as they become 'like God' by 'knowing him as he is.'"[206] Aquinas understood this journey of the predestined elect "as a progressive participation in the divine perfections that proportions the creature to the vision of the divine essence."[207] God's creative and sanctifying causality has a Trinitarian form, the eternal processions of the Persons are the *ratio* and cause of the procession of creatures. The created image of God is recreated by the gift of grace: "Through the missions of the Son and Holy Spirit, flowing from the gift of grace, participation in the Word and Love transforms the creature's

[202] D. SPEZZANO, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 15.
[203] Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 16.
[204] Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 16.
[205] Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 71.
[206] Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 71.
[207] Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 71.

intellect and will so that it may begin to possess and enjoy the indwelling divine Persons."[208] The goal and substance of the rational creature's perfection are the perfect knowledge and love of God.[209]

Chapter Two considers the image of God and its perfection. Spezzano notes that in the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae* Aquinas consistently stresses "the notion of progression in the perfection of the divine image, one that culminates in deiformity."[210] The rational creatures who are predestined for eternal life are on a journey of transformation and increasingly participate in the divine likeness. The participation proper to grace and glory "involves an assimilation such that the image shares not only in God's intellectual nature but also in its proper object, act, and – in glory – even its intelligible species, the divine essence itself."[211] God knows and wills for rational creatures to share in his Trinitarian existence of knowledge and love: "The rational creature represents its divine cause by imaging the processions of the Son and the Holy Spirit."[212] The intentionality toward God as the actual or habitual object of its knowledge and love is dynamic: "While the image of the Trinity exists secondarily in the habits and powers of the soul, it is found chiefly in its acts, producing a word and love that most nearly represent the active processions of Word and Love in the Trinity [*Summa theologiae*, I, q. 93, a. 7]."[213]

Chapter Three focuses on how the *imago Dei* is deified by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The infused habit of grace "perfects the conformation of rational creatures to God begun in creation – as a participation in the divine nature, grace deifies the re-created image so as to make it capable of the supernatural intellectual activities of knowing and loving God that bring it to beatitude through the medium of the infused virtues and gifts."[214] Grace gives the predestined creature the new being and capacities that fit it for the journey to supernatural happiness in the freedom of an adopted son. "[P]articipation in the divine nature orders the adopted children of God toward beatitude by making

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[208] Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 71.
[209] Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 71.
[210] D. SPEZZANO, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 103.
[211] D. SPEZZANO, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 103.
[212] D. SPEZZANO, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 103.
[213] D. SPEZZANO, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 104.
[214] D. SPEZZANO, *The Glory of God's Grace*, pp. 150-151.

them like the one and triune God in their nature and activities, disposing them to be led by the Holy Spirit to move freely to that new end in filial obedience."[215]

Chapter Four considers the incarnation of the Son of God and its relation to our participation in the divine nature. By the grace of union, divinity belongs to Christ not as a participated likeness of the divine nature, but as a personal property. "Yet because of the distinction of his two natures, Christ as human possesses habitual grace, which is a participation in the divine nature like ours. Still, Christ's habitual grace, flowing from the union, is also unlike ours in that he participates in the divine nature in fullness, which gives this participation a soteriological significance, making him both our model and the causal exemplar of our deification."[216] In his humanity, Christ also possesses the grace of headship, by which he communicates the grace of the Holy Spirit to others

Chapters Five and Six considers the two specific effects of the missions of the Son and Holy Spirit in the rational creature – charity and wisdom flowing from grace. Charity "as a participation in the Holy Spirit describes the perfection of the image by grace with respect to the will, by a participation in the divine procession of Love."[217] Charity's perfection of the will by participation in the Holy Spirit is complemented by wisdom's perfection of the intellect by the Son.[218]

Spezzano's main contribution is the recovery of the dynamism proper to divinization. In my opinion, her contribution needs to be incorporated into Fabro's notion of supernatural participation as an "*attingere per operationem*." At the same time, Spezzano limits her work to an exposition of Aquinas's mature thought and does not engage directly in the debates on the natural desire to see God.

7. Jacob Wood

Jacob Wood engaged in the debate about the natural desire to see God in his 2014 dissertation: *The Natural Desire for God: Henri de Lubac and European Thomists of the Early Twentieth Century* (2014).

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[215] D. SPEZZANO, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 151.
[216] Daria SPEZZANO, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 207.
[217] Daria SPEZZANO, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 263.
[218] Daria SPEZZANO, *The Glory of God's Grace*, p. 264.

He also published two articles[219] on the topic before his book: *To Stir a Restless Heart: Thomas Aquinas and Henri de Lubac on Nature, Grace, and the Desire for God* (2019). In his work, Wood seeks to understand the immediate historical context of Aquinas's thought and determine more precisely the authors Aquinas himself was engaging. This required Wood to undertake a detailed tracing of the development of Aquinas's doctrine on natural desire and on the natural desire to see God.

In Chapter Two of his book, Wood argues that, in his early *Scriptum*, Aquinas holds that nature has a capacity for grace and can be well-disposed for grace, but has no active motion toward grace.[220] Aquinas refers to the "will as nature" (*voluntas ut natura*) as a natural inclination, "in such a way as seems to impute the motion of natural desire to natural will."[221] Wood argues that appetite and inclination do not necessarily imply motion and that Aquinas "uses the word *inclinatio* to indicate the relationship of a potency to its act antecedent of any motion toward the act."[222] Inclination, Wood holds, is closer to "appetite" at this point in Aquinas's career. Appetite, for Aquinas, is a passive power, ordered to an act and requires the presence of an appetible object in order to be actualized.[223]

According to Wood, the early Aquinas distinguishes "appetite" from a "desire," because desire is an appetite which has been actualized and set in motion, but which has yet to attain its object.[224] Wood concludes that the "will as nature" has a "natural desire" for its end "when

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[219] J. WOOD, "Recasting Augustine to Look like Aristotle: Philip the Chancellor, Natural Desire, and the Advent of *potentia obedientiae*," *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition 13 (2015), pp. 815-36; *ibid*., "Henri de Lubac, *Humani Generis*, and the Natural Desire for a Supernatural End," *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition 15 (2017), pp. 1209-1241.

[220] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 151.

[221] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 155.

[222] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 156.

[223] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 156. See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In III Sent*., d. 27, q. 1, a. 1: "appetitus autem est virtus passiva […]. Omne autem passivum perficitur secundum quod informatur per formam sui activi; et in hoc motus ejus terminatur et quiescit."

[224] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 156. See THOMAS AQUINAS *In III Sent*., d. 26, q. 2, a. 3 qc. 2: "desiderium autem importat motum in ipsum amabile nondum habitum; unde motus appetitus incipit in desiderio, et

that appetite has been set in motion by the presence of an appetible object which has yet to be obtained."[225] Wood points to Aquinas's texts in the *Scriptum* which affirm that when the will is set in motion, this motion ordinarily follows the knowledge of the intellect.[226] He sees Aquinas disagreeing with his contemporary Bonaventure that our natural desire moves toward the vision of God as to a terminus. For Aquinas, "although the vision of God is beatitude itself, it does not follow that whoever desires beatitude desires the vision of God, since beatitude, as such, implies the *per se* object of will, but the vision of God does not."[227] Wood holds that Aquinas denies that the vision of God is under the *per se* object of the will for two reasons. First, Wood discerns that Aquinas's early work affirms a natural *appetite* (passive capacity) for the vision of God and denies a natural *desire* for the vision.[228] Second, he

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terminatur in amore completo; et ideo desiderium est quaedam inchoatio amoris, et quasi quidam amor imperfectus. […] primus motus appetitus in bonum est desiderium." [Desire implies a motion toward the loveable itself that is not yet possessed. Hence, the motion of the appetite begins in desire, and terminates in complete love; and, therefore, desire is a certain beginning of love, and like an imperfect love. […] the first motion of the appetite to the good is desire.]

[225] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 156.

[226] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 176. See THOMAS AQUINAS, *In IV Sent*., d. 33, q. 1, a. 1 ad 9: "naturalis inclinatio in appetitiva sequitur naturalem conceptionem in cognitione." Wood also points out that there are texts in which Aquinas seems to anticipate later developments in his thought and to suggest that natural inclination does not need to follow natural knowledge (see *In IV Sent*., d. 49, q. 3, a. 1 qa. 1: "Uno modo per inclinationem naturalem, sicut lapis movetur deorsum; et hic motus non praeexigit cognitionem in eo quod movetur, sed in alio quod est principium causans hanc inclinationem; et hic est motus naturalis.").

[227] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In IV Sent*., d. 49, q. 1, a. 3, qa. 1 ad 2: "quamvis divina visio sit ipsa beatitudo, non tamen sequitur quod quicumque appetit beatitudinem, appetat divinam visionem: quia beatitudo, inquantum hujusmodi, importat per se objectum voluntatis, non autem ipsa divina visio."

[228] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, pp. 177-178: "First, since what previous generations of theologians had called a potency for obedience is but one property of a creature's material potency, since matter is purely passive in relation to form, and since any substantial form communicates complete sub-

holds that Aquinas's early work proposes that we do not have natural knowledge of the vision of God.[229] Human nature has a passive receptivity to the vision of God, but no active motion toward that vision: "In human nature's material principle, it always has a natural ordering toward and *appetite* for the vision of God, even if in the *Commentary on the Sentences* it does not possess a principle which actualizes this appetite so that it causes a natural *desire* for the vision of God."[230] Wood concludes that, in his early *Scriptum*, Aquinas affirms that there is a natural *appetite* for or a natural inclination to a supernatural end, but no natural *desire* for that end.[231]

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stantial existence to matter while determining the range of its subsequent activity, the exercise of an appetite as a desire requires two things: first, that the matter be actualized by some form; second, that the actualized desire operate within the range of activity communicated by the form to the matter. Human nature can by all means be said to have a natural *appetite* for the vision of God, because it is passively capable of receiving the vision of God, but it cannot be said to have a natural *desire* to see God in the *Commentary on the Sentences*, because that would require that the vision of God fall within the range of activity which the human soul can perform of its own accord."

[229] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, pp. 178: "Thomas thinks that the motion of the will follows knowledge of the intellect, to say that, to say that the per se object of the will is the vision of God would require that the intellect have a natural knowledge of that vision. But this is impossible in two ways: first, because as we have seen, Thomas denies that the intellect has natural concepts; second, because no concept of God that we form can ever comprehend the divine essence."

[230] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, pp. 178.

[231] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, pp. 200-201: "For Thomas, creatures possess a 'material' passive potency which is distinct from their formal, active potency. This passive potency does not correspond in every respect with its active counterpart. Just as matter possesses a potential which cannot be actualized completely by any one form, so does the material potency in a creature exceed what can be actualized by its form. […] With Albert, Thomas argues that human nature has a natural desire for a natural end: the activity of our nature, which follows from our substantial form, terminates in the analogical knowledge of God as first cause. With Bonaventure, Thomas argues that human nature is still "naturally" open to grace, because it has a natural appetite for a supernatural end: its "material" potency is always open to the vision of God, which alone can confer upon it complete perfection. Nature is, as it were,

In Chapter Three, Wood considers Aquinas's more mature thought in the *Summa contra Gentiles*. In the section on grace, Wood first notes the continuity with Aquinas's earlier works: "As in the *Commentary on the Sentences* and *De veritate*, the reception of grace is not a miracle, even if it is in some way beyond the power of nature to perform acts under the influence of grace. Rather, the reception of grace involves the reception of an accidental form which exceeds the active potential of nature, but not its passive potential."[232] In the *Summa contra Gentiles*, Wood sees Aquinas using "natural appetite" and "natural inclination" interchangeably, even though "natural inclination" seems to be a broader category.[233] Wood concludes that "both appetite and inclination indicate a passive ordering in nature toward an end as distinct from the motion by which a nature moves toward that end. Adding motion to an appetite or inclination transforms it into a desire."[234]

In considering the natural *desire* for the vision of God, Wood points out that in the *Summa contra Gentiles* Aquinas argues that Aristotle's analogical-metaphysical knowledge of God cannot be our final end. Wood summarizes Aquinas's arguments as follows: "our final end is not reached until our natural desire is fulfilled, and our natural desire is not sated until our highest potency is completely actualized; but the analogical knowledge of God leaves some potency of our intellect in some matter unactualized; therefore, the analogical knowledge of God cannot be our final end."[235] According to Wood, Aquinas's arguments in *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 39 concern our natural *desire* and not

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the matter out of which grace can therefore be described as an 'obediential property' (*ratio obedientialis*) of its material potency, rather than a separate 'potency for obedience' (*potentia obedientiae*) within it. We see an example of the relationship between natural appetite and natural desire in the souls that Thomas supposes to be in limbo. They reach an end, because they reach the terminal development of their natural *desire*, but they do not reach their *ultimate* end, because they do not reach the terminal development of their natural appetite. Their lack of sorrow is based upon the fact that God has not withheld from them the fulfillment of their natural desire, only the fulfillment of their natural appetite."

[232] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 214. See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 149.

[233] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, pp. 216-17.

[234] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 217.

[235] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 226.

our natural *appetite*, and thus presuppose some motion toward our final end. The soul "seeks with a natural desire the fulfillment of a natural appetite insofar as is possible."[236] Wood concludes: "By arguing that the natural desire of the human intellect seeks the complete fulfillment of its natural appetite insofar as possible, rather than the terminal fulfillment of the motion it possesses by nature, Thomas was able to show how Aristotelian contemplation cannot serve as man's final end."[237] And so, rather than rooting our primary orientation toward the vision of God in an *active desire*, Aquinas appeals to a *passive appetite*. That being the case, Aquinas still thinks that the existence of a natural desire can only prove the *possibility* of the vision of God, and not its *actuality*.[238]

Chapter Four considers Aquinas's teaching while in Rome (1265-68) and the natural desire to see God in the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae.* Aquinas is clear that the bestowal of grace is not an act "against nature" (*contra naturam*) but is an act "above nature" (*supra naturam*). Wood holds that while the eduction of grace is above the active principle in nature, it is not above the passive principle in nature. "[G]race is 'super-added' because it actualizes a creature's passive potential for *accidental* perfection."[239] In his conclusion to Chapter Four, Wood notes that *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 12 shows that when Aquinas speaks philosophically, he talks about the *possibility* of the vision of God; and when he speaks theologically, Aquinas talks about what will *actually* happen.[240]

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[236] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 228. See p. 244: "[W]hen our natural appetite is actualized in the form of a natural desire, Thomas now says that the resulting desire seeks the perfection of its corresponding appetite 'insofar as is possible.' Left to itself, the intellect's natural desire terminates in the analogical knowledge of God as first cause. But since a natural desire seeks the highest possible perfection of its corresponding appetite, and since the highest possible perfection of our natural appetite is the vision of God, the end of our natural desire is – at least implicitly – also the vision of God. All the motion that the intellect receives from God is devoted to this end, and since the intellect's highest good is the human person's highest good, all motion that the will receives through the intellect is similarly devoted to this end."

[237] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 244.

[238] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 245.

[239] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 285.

[240] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 298.

Chapter Five considers Aquinas's second Parisian period (1268-72) and Aquinas's mature teaching on the natural desire for God in *Summa theologiae*, I-II (1271). Wood highlights how Aquinas's argument in the *Summa contra Gentiles* and *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 12, a. 1 focused on the natural desire of the *intellect* to know the cause of all things. But since the acts of reasoning depend on the prior motion of the will, Aquinas introduces the motion of the will into the argument.[241] In *Summa theologiae*, I-II, Aquinas "now includes reference to the natural desire of the will prior to the natural desire of the intellect when discussing our natural desire for the vision of God."[242] Wood summarizes the change in Aquinas's argumentation: it is not only possible for the will to command the reasoning, but it is necessary.[243] Just as the intellect cannot be perfectly satisfied until its potency is completely fulfilled, so neither can the will. "Thus, just as Thomas concluded in the *Summa contra Gentiles* that the ultimate perfection of the intellect necessarily consists in the vision of God, so now does he conclude in the *Prima secundae*, that the ultimate perfection of the will, and of human nature as a whole, consists in the same."[244]

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[241] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 332-34. See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 5, a. 8: "Cum autem bonum sit obiectum voluntatis, perfectum bonum est alicuius, quod totaliter eius voluntati satisfacit. Unde appetere beatitudinem nihil aliud est quam appetere ut voluntas satietur. Quod quilibet vult." [But since good is the object of the will, the perfect good of a man is that which entirely satisfies his will. Consequently to desire happiness is nothing else than to desire that one's will be satisfied. And this everyone desires.]

[242] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 354.

[243] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 336: "Although Thomas had said as far back as the *Commentary on the Sentences* that such acts *could* be commanded by the will, there was no sense in any text from the *De veritate* to the *Summa contra Gentiles* that they *had* to be commanded by the will. Now it is otherwise. Since the will is the first mover in the soul, it is not only *possible* for the will to command the reasoning involved in the argument, it is *necessary*; otherwise the first act of reasoning will not take place. Consequently, before Thomas says anything at all about the intellect in particular, he attends first to the desire of "man," which desire flows from human nature into the will, as we have seen above, and includes all the perfection of that nature, including the perfection of the intellect."

[244] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 337.

Wood also points to Aquinas's use of "obediential potency" in *Quaestio disputata de virtutibus in communi*, which was most likely composed shortly after the *Prima secundae* of the *Summa theologiae*. Wood holds that obediential potency is not exclusive to miracles and, in Aquinas's mature thought, overlaps with natural passive potency. [245] Human nature, according to Wood, has a natural aptitude to receive the supernatural forms which exceed the *facultas* of nature. Only through the reception of supernatural perfections from God is the human soul able to return to its origin completely, and so reach its ultimate perfection. According to Wood, we can say that the gifts of grace are natural according to their passive principle and supernatural according to their active principle.[246] In the end, Wood argues that, according to Aquinas's *De virtutibus in communi*, our obediential potency is the entirety of our passive potency. The part of our passive potency that can be actualized by a connatural agent is our natural potency; the rest of our passive potency can only be actualized by God. According to Wood, our will and our intellect seek the fulfillment of our passive potency insofar as is possible, and, thus, we not only have a natural desire for the fulfillment of our natural potency, but also a natural desire for the fulfillment of our obediential potency insofar as is possible.[247]

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[245] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 346: "A creature's obediential potency is the whole of its material potency as it stands before God. The portion of that potency which can be actualized by connatural agents can also be described as the creature's natural passive potency. If we combine what Thomas says in the *De virtutibus* about obediential potency with what he says in the *Prima secundae* about natural desire, it would be fair to say that Thomas thinks that, in a very qualified sense, human nature has a natural desire for the fulfillment of its obediential potency, because it has a natural desire for the fulfillment of its potency insofar as is possible."

[246] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 348.

[247] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, pp. 354-55. See also p. 426: "Cajetan did not err in suggesting that, for Thomas, man is absolutely passive with respect to the reception of grace; here Cajetan preserves a common doctrine of Thomas and Scotus. But Cajetan did err, at least in emphasis, in suggesting that the best way to account for nature's receptivity to grace is by postulating an obediential potency in nature for grace. For Thomas, man is naturally *capax Dei* in that man has a "material" potency whereby he stands in privation to accidental perfections received from God. These accidental perfections are

While I disagree with Wood on employing the term "obediential potency" to characterize our passive potency to the beatific vision, I believe Wood's thesis highlights the importance of tracing the development of Aquinas's thought on themes connected to grace, especially the evolution of his thought on the natural desire of the intellect and the will to see God.[248] In light of this development, it is important to be cautious when using Aquinas's early texts as proof texts to establish a particular point about the natural desire to see God. In the end, Wood states that his intention was to mediate between Henri de Lubac and the Scholastic commentators and expresses this intention in the conclusion to his work:

> We can affirm, with de Lubac, man's orientation toward the vision of God as a final end, but acknowledge, with the commentators, that a natural end for man is possible. We can affirm, with de Lubac, that human nature as such is open to the vision of God and that this openness need not be considered as an obediential potency, but acknowledge, with the commentators, that our receptivity to the vision is purely passive. We can affirm, with de Lubac, that a natural desire for the vision of God does not make the vision of God owed to nature, but we can acknowledge, with

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suitable objects of natural desire insofar as they are included in the complete actualization of the human intellect and will. Cajetan, by contrast, limits man's natural desire to an end which is naturally known. He thus separates obediential potency from natural potency, placing the fulfillment of obediential potency outside the bounds of natural desire. De Lubac rightly criticizes Cajetan's sole reliance on the concept of obediential potency to establish nature's receptivity to grace, though greater awareness of those few texts where Thomas shows an openness to the concept would have been beneficial to his argument."

[248] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 356: "the solutions that Thomas reaches to questions about nature, grace, and the desire for God in the *Summa theologiae* are the result of an entire career's worth of scholarly development. That development was constant. In light of the challenges that Thomas faced in his second Paris regency, we cannot – indeed, we should not – presume an identity in Thomas's thought on nature, grace, and the desire for God from one stage of his career to the next."

> the commentators, that one reason why the vision of God is not owed to nature is that God could *reasonably* withhold it.[249]

By positing that our natural desire seeks the fulfillment of our natural appetite insofar as this is possible and that it can rest in a naturally achievable act, i.e. analogical knowledge of God, if unaided by the gift of God's grace, Wood is trying to protect both the integrity of nature and the gratuity of grace.[250]

While Wood holds that, for Aquinas, appetite is more fundamental than desire and that desire adds a motion to appetite, Alain Contat will argue the opposite. According to Contat, our intellect and will naturally desire the beatific vision and these desires are more fundamental than appetite, they are unconditional and, as natural desires, they do not consider the possibility or impossibility of attaining the desired object.

8. Alain Contat

In his two articles on the natural desire to see God, Alain Contat holds that there is an aspect of "desire" that has been neglected by Thomists and that this characteristic clarifies the nature and implications of the desire for the beatific vision. Contat begins his first article by presenting six aporetic questions that he will resolve systematically in the second article. The solution is based on the characteristic of desire that it is without the consideration of the possibility or impossibility of attaining the desired object.

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[249] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, p. 430.

[250] J. WOOD, *To Stir a Restless Heart*, pp. 430-31: "[H]uman natural desire seeks the fulfillment of human natural appetite insofar as is possible. Left unaided, our natural desire comes to rest in the analogical knowledge of God as first cause; but raised by grace, that same desire comes to rest in the vision of the divine essence. This answer protects the integrity of nature by allowing its active principle to come to rest in a naturally achievable teleological act; it protects the gratuity of grace by ensuring that God could reasonably withhold it; it protects nature's openness to grace by showing how and in what way human nature can be said to have a natural desire for the vision of God; and it protects nature's need for grace because it is a subjective desire for self-fulfillment, rather than an objective desire that can claim any right before God."

8.1 The Natural Desire to See God: Six Aporias

[1] *Does a natural desire to see God exist?* Mature passages from the *Summa contra Gentiles*, the *Compendium theologiae*, and the *Summa theologiae*[251] all affirm that there is a natural desire to see God. On the other hand, youthful passages from the *Scriptum* and *De ueritate* seem to deny this.[252] Contat notes that the texts that affirm a natural desire use the word "desire" (*desiderare*) and negative texts, with the exception of the one from the *Scriptum*, use appetite (*appetere*).[253]

[2] *Does the natural desire aim at the very essence of God insofar as this is our beatitude?* Some texts of Aquinas affirm that we are naturally inclined to our supernatural end;[254] other texts seem to deny this (due to a lack of proportion between our nature and eternal beatitude).[255] Once again, Contat highlights that Aquinas's texts affirm the natural *desire* for perfect beatitude and deny the natural *appetite* for this same beatitude.[256]

[3] *Does the natural desire to see God require a prior and actual knowledge of God?* Some authors, such as Lawrence Feingold, hold that Aquinas's texts, such as *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 50, establish that the desire to see God is an *elicited* desire that follows the knowledge

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[251] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 48 and ch. 50; *Compendium theologiae*, I, ch. 104; and *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 3, a. 8.

[252] THOMAS AQUINAS, *In III Sent*., d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 ad 4; *De ueritate*, q. 22, a. 7.

[253] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre le désir naturel de voir Dieu selon saint Thomas d'Aquin (I)," *Revue Thomiste* 117 (2017), p. 402.

[254] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Lectura super II ad Corinthios*, ch. 13, lect. 2 (Marietti, n. 534): "Gratia autem datur homini a Deo, per quam homo perveniat ad suam ultimam et perfectam consummationem, id est beatitudinem, ad quam habet naturale desiderium." [Grace, then, is given to man by God, by which man comes to his ultimate and perfection consummation, i.e. beatitude, to which he has a natural desire.]

[255] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De spe*, a. 1 ad 8: "Bonum proportionatum movet appetitum; non enim naturaliter appetuntur ea quae non sunt proportionata. Quod autem beatitudo aeterna sit bonum proportionatum nobis, hoc est ex gratia Dei." [The proportionate good moves the appetite; for those things which are not proportioned are not naturally sought. Now, that eternal beatitude be a proportionate good to us, this is by the grace of God.]

[256] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (I)," p. 404.

of God's effects and is not an *innate* desire prior to any such knowledge.[257] However, as Jorge Laporta argues, Aquinas's texts attribute the natural desire to see the divine substance to all spiritual creatures without positing any previous condition.[258]

[4] *Does the natural desire to see God have the intellect or the will as its subject?* Aquinas's texts seem to attribute the desire to the intellect;[259] yet other texts of Aquinas define desire in reference to the will: "desire is according to the will that tends to that which it does not yet have."[260] It seems like the desire is formally an act of the will even though it can be elicited by the intellect. However, one could also posit that both faculties are implied in the natural desire to see God according to a prior and posterior order.[261]

[5] *In what sense is the natural desire to see God not in vain?* It is impossible for a natural desire to be "in vain" because nature is the principle of the operations that bring a substance to its proper end. Consequently, a natural desire has to be "realizable." For Aquinas, the non-vanity of the natural desire only proves the *possibility* of the beatific vision for the finite spirit, but not its *actualization*.[262] Other texts, like *De ueritate*, q. 13, a. 3 ad 6, seem to go beyond this and posit that it is also natural for the human intellect to *achieve* or come to (*perveniat*)

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[257] L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God*, pp. 397-98: "Therefore, the texts of St. Thomas only show the existence of an *elicited* natural desire – following on the knowledge of God's effects – and not an innate desire which would be prior to and independent of any such knowledge, and thus as blind and unconscious as a rock's tendency to fall."

[258] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (I)," pp. 405-408. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 51: "pervenire ad divinam substantiam intelligendam, quod naturaliter omnes mentes desiderant"

[259] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 50: "Nihil finitum desiderium intellectus quietare potest. […] Non igitur intellectus substantiae separate quiescit per hoc quod cognoscit substantias creatas quantumcumque eminentes." [Nothing finite can set the desire of the intellect at rest. […] Therefore, the intellect of a separated substance is not satisfied with knowing created substances, however excellent they be.]

[260] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, ch. 26: "Est enim desiderium secundum quod voluntas tendit in id quod nondum habet."

[261] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (I)," p. 408.

[262] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (I)," p. 410.

the vision of the divine essence.[263] The latter position seems to run the risk of deducing the vision from the nature of the intellect as a perfection that is owed to it in such a way that glory and grace are no longer gratuitous.[264]

[6] *Does the natural desire to see God imply a natural potency or obediential potency to the beatific vision?* After the appearance of the *nouvelle théologie* in the 1940s and De Lubac's *Surnaturel* (1946), many asked whether the potency of the created intellectual nature to the beatific vision was natural or obediential. Aquinas often associates obediential potency with miracles. In the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas denies that justification is a miracle, because "the justification of the impious is not beyond [their] natural potency."[265] However, Aquinas's *Compendium theologiae* seems to limit the natural potency of the intellect to what can be actuated by the agent intellect in such a way that one could conclude that the potency revealed by the natural desire to know God is not natural.[266] It is important to see that even though Aquinas

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[263] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De ueritate*, q. 13, a. 3, ad 6: "quamvis naturale sit intellectui humano quod quandoque ad visionem divinae essentiae perveniat."

[264] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (I)," p. 410.

[265] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 113, a. 10, sed contra: "Sed iustificatio impii non est supra potentiam naturalem." See also *In IV Sent*., d. 17, q. 1, a. 5, sol. 1: "Ordo naturalis inest animae ad justitiae rectitudinem consequendam." [A natural order to obtaining the rectitude of justice is in the soul.]

[266] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Compendium theologiae*, I, ch. 104: "Est autem aliquid in potentia dupliciter : uno modo naturaliter, respectu eorum scilicet quae per agens naturale possunt reduci in actum; alio modo respectu eorum quae reduci non possunt in actum per agens naturale, sed per aliquod aliud agens [...]. Est enim intellectus noster in potentia naturali respectu quorumdam intelligibilium, quae scilicet reduci possunt in actum per intellectum agentem, qui est principium innatum nobis, ut per ipsum efficiamur intelli- gentes in actu. Est autem impossibile nos ultimum finem consequi per hoc quod intellectus noster sic reducatur in actum." [A thing may be in potency in two ways: either naturally, that is, with respect to perfections that can be reduced to act by a connatural agent; or else with respect to perfections that cannot be reduced to act by a connatural agent but require some other agent. […] Our intellect has a natural potency with regard to certain intelligible objects, namely, those that can be reduced to act by the agent intellect. We possess this faculty as an innate principle so that through it we may understand in actuality. However,

affirms that no creature has the power to give themselves the beatific vision, he never qualifies the relation of the intellect to the ultimate end as an obediential potency.[267] According to Etienne Gilson, the natural desire to see God should not to be classified as an obediential potency, but rather manifests a natural potency without any corresponding connatural agent.[268]

8.2 Aquinas's Mature Thought on Desire

In Part Two of his article, Contat points to the first article of Aquinas's *Quaestio disputata De spe*, which contains an important key to solve the aporetic questions. Contat highlights how, in this mature text of Aquinas, a desire is without (*absque*) the consideration of whether or not the desired object (some absolute good) is attainable or accessible:

> To hope involves some motion of the appetitive power tending to the good, not to something already possessed, as in joy and delight, but to something yet to be attained, as in desire and cupidity. Hope and desire differ in two ways. […] Second, because desire is for some absolute good, without considering the possibility or impossibility of it; but hope tends to some good, as to that which is possible to attain: for it implies in its *ratio* some security of attainment.[269]

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we cannot attain our ultimate end by the actuation of our intellect through the agent intellect.]

[267] Contat notes that after Henri de Lubac's book, some Thomists of the "Roman School" began to employ the term "*specific* obediential potency," which allowed them to continue using "obediential potency" to protect the gratuity of the supernatural and to affirm that this obediential potency brings human nature to its fulfillment.

[268] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (I)," p. 413.

[269] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De spe*, a. 1: "sperare importat motum quemdam appetitivae virtutis tendentem in bonum, non quidem ut iam habitum, sicut gaudium et delectatio, sed tamquam assequendum, sicut etiam desiderium et cupiditas. Differt tamen spes a desiderio in duobus. [...] Secundo, quia desiderium est alicuius boni absolute, absque consideratione possibilitatis et impossibilitatis illius; sed spes tendit in aliquod bonum, sicut in id quod est

After recalling this text, Contat explores at length how, according to Aquinas, the will naturally desires that the intellect see the divine essence.[270] Contat recalls that our natural desire comes to rest in the vision of the divine essence, in which our beatitude consists.[271] He argues that the conscious question of the intellect, "What is God in his essence?," which follows upon the knowledge of God's existence, is correlative, in the will, to a movement of conscious desire.[272] The desire to see God is natural not insofar as it is elicited by the will, but insofar as it is specified by the ultimate question that the intellect can raise.[273] In the end, Contat holds that the desire to see God is formally an act of the will and materially a desire of the intellect.[274] We can, by our natural powers, elicit the simple volition of the vision of God, but we are incapable of having the intention (*intentio*) of seeing God. The *conscious* natural desire to see God arises from the will as nature (*voluntas ut natura*) or "simple volition," which tends in an absolute way, detached from any deliberation and effective decision, to the ultimate perfection of the intellect.[275] Contat writes:

> The desire for the divine vision is first of all a desire, because it is defined as a movement of the will towards an absent object: the understanding of God *per essentiam*. Like every desire, it is "without consideration of its possibility or impossibility," and therefore is prior to any judgment of the attainability of the end to which it aims. For this reason, it regards this good "absolu-

possibile adipisci: importat enim in sui ratione quamdam securitatem adipiscendi."

[270] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 536.

[271] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Compendium theologiae*, I, ch. 106: "Quomodo naturale desiderium quiescit ex divina visione per essentiam, in qua beatitudo consistit. Hoc autem fine adepto, necesse est naturale desiderium quietari, quia essentia divina, quae modo praedicto coniungetur intellectui Deum videntis, est sufficiens principium omnia cognoscendi et fons totius bonitatis, ut nihil restare possit ad desiderandum."

[272] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 545.

[273] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 545.

[274] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 545.

[275] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 548.

> tely," without, therefore, the will being able to elicit the intention of achieving it, in the technical sense of *intentio*: by itself, the desire alone to see the divine essence is powerless to establish [*fonder*] any existential project. This is why it ranks, among the series of human acts, with the first of them, the *voluntas* or "simple volition," which totally abstracts from the means of obtaining the desired end.[276]

Contat also addresses an interpretation of one of Aquinas's texts (*Summa theologiae*, III, q. 21, a. 4) that characterizes the will as nature as relative (*secundum quid*) and not *simpliciter* (conditional).[277] This is part of Báñez's interpretation of the desire to see God as an elicited and conditional desire. Contat notes that in a previous question (III, q. 18, a. 3), Aquinas identifies the *voluntas ut natura* with an act which "is borne to the end simply and absolutely, as to that which is good in itself."[278] Contat integrates the two texts as follows with regard to the natural desire to see God: as a willing of nature (*vouloir de nature*), it is absolute. But that same desire can become conditional if confronted with a judgment of unattainability or it can be ratified within the economy of salvation, since it is true that the vision of God is accessible. The error of Báñez, then, is to link together the natural desire and its natural inaccessibility, forgetting that a desire aims at the desired good in an absolute manner, prior to any evaluation of its accessibility.[279]

8.3 Solution to the Six Aporias

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[276] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 548.

[277] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 21, a. 4: "Voluntas autem simpliciter hominis est voluntas rationis, hoc enim absolute volumus quod secundum deliberatam rationem volumus. Illud autem quod volumus secundum motum sensualitatis, vel etiam secundum motum voluntatis simplicis, quae consideratur ut natura, *non simpliciter volumus, sed secundum quid*, scilicet, si aliud non obsistat quod per deliberationem rationis invenitur. Unde talis voluntas magis est dicenda velleitas quam absoluta voluntas, quia scilicet homo hoc vellet si aliud non obsisteret."

[278] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 18, a. 3: "Nam in finem fertur simpliciter et absolute, sicut in id quod est secundum se bonum."

[279] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 551.

With this understanding of natural desire – desire is without the consideration of the possibility or impossibility of attaining its desired object – and with a distinction between the way in which the "will as nature" desires and the intellect is inclined to its ultimate end, Contat responds to the six aporetic questions outlined in his first article.

[1] *There is a true natural desire to see God.* Contat argues that Aquinas's early *Scriptum* holds that there must be a proportion between the object of desire and the natural active power of the desiring subject. This early text has led many interpreters of Aquinas to deny a natural desire for the beatific vision. From the *Summa contra Gentiles* on, however, Aquinas affirms the existence of a natural desire to see God with no corresponding connatural agent. This natural desire in no way compromises the gratuitousness of the beatific vision or the gratuitousness of the supernatural gifts which dispose a human being to it since this desire is prior to the judgment of the attainability of the desired object.[280] We naturally desire the vision of the divine essence and desire this without considering whether or not this vision can in some way be attained.

[2] *The object of the natural desire is the vision of God's essence as its perfect beatitude.* The will, Contat argues, can tend to an end that is naturally desired in two ways: according to a natural willing (*voluntas ut natura*) or according to a deliberate will (*voluntas ut ratio*). In the second case, the will seeks (*appetere*) the end efficaciously and chooses proportionate means. In the first case, however, the desired perfection is desired as an end that is real in itself (*in se*), but not for us (*quoad nos*), and is not yet targeted as an end that the subject can really attain.[281] The distinction between the *natural desire* for the beatific vision and the *deliberate seeking* (appetite) of the vision allows us to harmonize Aquinas's seemingly contradictory texts on the question. Aquinas rationally demonstrates that the human being naturally desires the beatific vision and that this is our perfect beatitude; but one cannot prove rationally and without the aid of Divine Revelation that this beatitude is in fact offered to us. Contat concludes that the beatific vision is naturally *desired* as the content of beatitude, but that it is never naturally sought

[280] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 553.
[281] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 553.

(*voulue*) as the end that effectively moves the dynamism of the spiritual *appetite*.[282]

[3] *The conscious natural desire follows our knowledge of the existence of God, while the unconscious natural desire is prior to this knowledge*. Contat argues that the desire to see God is virtually included in the natural inclination of the will to the good of the intellect.[283] As Aquinas writes in his *Summa theologiae*: "It belongs to each power of the soul to seek its proper good by the natural appetite, which does not arise from apprehension."[284] The desire to see the essence of the First Cause, as a natural volition, is a *conscious* act which is consequent upon a certain knowledge of God; the natural desire to see God's essence, as an inclination of the intellect to its ultimate end, is an *unconscious* capacity prior to all knowledge.[285] Because of the ontological and noetical priority of act over potency, the natural desire to see God is first considered as the act of simple volition and secondly as the potential ordination of the intellect to the divine vision.[286] At the same time, the unconscious inclination of the intellect is the foundation of the *conscious* desire of the will because it specifies it. Thus, it is the analysis of the natural desire to see God that allows us to move from a *conscious act* to its foundation in an *unconscious inclination* because the desire is natural and is a property of created spiritual nature itself.[287]

[4] *The natural desire is an act of the will that reveals the openness of the intellect*. Contat proposes that the natural desire to see God unfolds analogically on several planes. First, it presents itself as a simple volition or an act of the will that has beatitude as its object and is necessary in terms of specification (and not in terms of exercise). Now, because the end of the desire is knowledge, it first aims to actualize the potency of intellect and then that of the will, because the full actualization of the latter requires the perfect actualization of the former by the beatifying gift of the divine vision. Just as the will is in potency to the

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[282] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 555.

[283] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 556.

[284] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 30, a. 1 ad 3: "unicuique potentiae animae competit appetere proprium bonum appetitu naturali, qui non sequitur apprehensionem."

[285] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 556.

[286] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 557.

[287] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 557.

act of desire, so the intellect is in potency to the object of the same desire.[288]

[5] *The non-vanity of the natural desire only proves the possibility of the vision and not the actual and gratuitous bestowal of the vision or the means to attain it.* Contat invokes the text from *De spe* to recall that the natural desire does not imply a judgment on the effective accessibility or attainability of the desired good. The existence of the natural desire only requires the *possibility* of the desired perfection and the *passive potency* of the subject. Now, a passive potency can be reduced to act by either a connatural or supernatural active power. If there is a connatural active power that can reduce the potency to act, then the judgment about the effective accessibility of the desired object is naturally consequent to the desire. However, this is not the case with the natural passive potency to the beatific vision. Because this passive potency can only be actualized by a supernatural active power, human reason can only establish that a supernatural agent has the power to realize the desire, but reason alone cannot in any way demonstrate that the supernatural agent will in fact actually do this. Contat concludes: metaphysical reason – after proving, thanks to the natural desire to see God, that the beatific vision is the ultimate perfection to which the created spiritual nature tends – can still prove that God could give himself to be seen by his intellectual creature and even explain in what manner God could do this. The non-vanity of the natural desire thus allows us to conclude rationally to the *possibility* of seeing God, but never to our effective *call* to that vision. Human reason can only show that the supreme appeasement of the natural desire to know provides a powerful argument of convenience in support of what has been revealed to us by God.[289]

[6] *The natural desire to see God manifests the natural passive potency of the intellect vis-à-vis the beatific vision.* By showing that the desire to see God is a *per se* property of the created spirit, we see that it is rooted in the very nature of the spiritual creature. In this sense, the relation of the created spirit to the beatific vision is a natural potency and not an obediential potency. The beatific vision, as the end of nature and not the natural end, is not something of nature, since it cannot be obtained by the powers of nature without grace and the infused virtues.

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[288] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 557.
[289] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 558.

What we are dealing with is a natural potency whose act is naturally inaccessible, but supernaturally accessible.[290]

8.4 Natural Desire to See God: Will and Intellect

After resolving the six aporetic problems, Contat draws out two main conclusions. The first is that the natural desire to see God must be understood analogically and refers to both the act of the will and the potency of the intellect.

The first, formal, analogue is the natural desire as an act of will: 1) it is a simple act of volition, which is necessary as regards specification (and not the exercise) and which tends towards an absent good, prior to any judgment of attainability; 2) this absent good consists in the vision of God's essence, which is seen as the full actualization of the possible intellect; and 3) the proximate origin of this actual volition is found in the question of the intellect about the essence of God, but since it is a natural desire, its remote foundation lies in the ordination of the intellect to the infinite.[291]

The elicited act of the will allows us, therefore, to resolve back to the potency of the intellect in relation to the beatific vision, which constitutes the second, fundamental, analogue of the natural desire: 1) it concerns the natural inclination of the possible intellect, which tends, before any judgment of attainability, to its ultimate perfection; 2) this perfection is the vision of Subsistent Being Itself, which responds to the question about the essence of the primary cause of being (*ens*), the proper object of the intellect; 3) the foundation of this inclination is none other than the constitutive ordination of the intellect to being and knowledge of the most universal causes.[292]

In both analogues, the tendency in question should not be qualified as an appetite, but as a natural desire, because it is "without the consideration of the [effective] possibility and impossibility."[293] The desire to see God is both absolute and inefficacious. The desire belongs

[290] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 559.
[291] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 560.
[292] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 560.
[293] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 561.

to nature without needing to distinguish between nature in itself and nature historically understood.[294]

Contat's second conclusion concerns the difference between the two analogues of natural desire and allows him to correct the interpretations of both Jorge Laporta and Lawrence Feingold. In his work, *La Destinée de la nature humaine selon Thomas d'Aquin* (1965), Laporta sets the actual desire of the will in opposition to the potential desire of the intellect, choosing one and excluding the other. Laporta's work notes that Aquinas often establishes the unconscious desire of the intellect from the conscious desire of the will. But his work does not analyze the elicited voluntary desire, nor the process that allows us to go back to the innate inclination of the intellect. As a result, Laporta discerns the formal aspiration to *beatitude* in the will and reserves the desire to see God to the intellect alone.[295] Laporta thus posits a dualism between the natural and *formal appetite* of the will which tends to beatitude in general and the natural and *real appetite of* the intellect which seeks the vision of God's essence. According to Contat, this dissociation does not account for the dynamic interaction between the two powers, by virtue of which the natural question of the intellect about the essence of the first cause arouses in the will the natural desire for the vision, due to the fact that "to understand" (*intelligere*) is a perfection which the "will as nature" necessarily wants, as far as specification is concerned. Reflecting on this conscious intentionality we are able to resolve back to the unconscious finality of the intellect, both of which are analyzed by means of the notion of desire, which is distinct from the notion of appetite. This resolution has the twofold advantage of respecting the role proper to each faculty, and of safeguarding the gratuitousness of our call to the vision, since desire does not imply the effective accessibility or attainability of its desired object.[296]

Contat also notes that Lawrence Feingold sets up an opposition between two desires by setting the conscious and elicited desire in opposition to the unconscious and innate desire. On the one hand, Feingold denies the existence of any innate desire whose object is the beatific vision. On the other, he limits the desire to see God to an elicited and

[294] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 562.
[295] J. LAPORTA, *La Destinée de la nature humaine*, p. 37.
[296] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 564.

conscious act of the will. Thus, for Feingold, the natural desire expresses a *possibility* of nature, but not the *end* of nature. Contat responds to Feingold's position that the natural desire is a simple and necessary volition and that the will is directed to the end in an absolute manner, but does not yet have the elicited intention of moving toward that end. We need to keep in mind the distinction between the will, which aims at the end in itself, and the intention, which looks to the end insofar as it is obtained by the means which lead to it. We do not and cannot naturally have the *intention*, nor the *appetite* for the beatific vision, but we naturally have the *desire* for it, and this is "absolute" and not conditional precisely because it prescinds from its accessibility.[297] Thanks to the recovery of Aquinas's mature text from *De spe*, Contat shows that the created spirit is animated by a real *desire* to see God's essence, and that this desire does not entail any intrinsic demand of the vision.[298]

8.5 Aquinas's Ontology of Grace

I close this section with a reference to Contat's recent article on the "ontology of the state of grace and the state of sin."[299] After reviewing the Scholastic theories of Ambroise Gardeil and Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange and the Fabrian inspired theories of Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo and Fernando Ocáriz, Contat offers his own solution to the problem of the participation of grace and the relationship between the act of being and the being of grace. He points to Aquinas's commentary on the Gospel of John, which states that "*ipsum esse*" pertains to the entire Trinity.[300] This responds to the Scholastic theories which posit grace as a formal participation in *intelligere* or grace as a formal participation in Deity, as if they are superior to participation in being (*esse*), and addresses the concern of Ocáriz who distinguishes between participation in

[297] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 566.

[298] A. CONTAT, "Une clef pour comprendre... (II)," p. 566.

[299] A. CONTAT, "Réflexions sur l'ontologie de l'état de grâce et de l'état de péché," in S.-T. BONINO and G. MAZZOTTA (eds.), *San Tommaso e la salvezza*, [Doctor Communis], Urbaniana University Press, Rome 2020, pp. 157-184.

[300] THOMAS AQUINAS, *Super Ioannem*, cap. VIII, lect. 3, n. 1192: "cum dicit quia Ego sum; idest, habeo in me naturam Dei, et sum illequi locutus est Moysi, dicens: ego sum qui sum. Sed quia ad ipsumesse pertinet tota Trinitas."

being (*esse*) and participation in the life of the Trinity. In the spiritual creature, participated being (*esse*) is contracted within the limits of human or angelic nature.[301] On the one hand, the creature's participated being (*esse*) participates in the nature of being (*natura essendi*) as it is the actuality principle of being (*ens*); on the other, being (*esse*) is contracted by the essence which receives it. For this reason, the nature of being (*natura essendi*) or the power of being (*virtus essendi*) of the participated being as act (*esse ut actus*) is blocked by the determination which comes to it from the created essence. Before justification, the act of being of the spiritual creature can only actuate, beyond human nature, the accidents and operations of its nature. Through the infusion of grace, God communicates to the soul a being-in-act (*esse in actu*) which exceeds the active power of the being as act (*esse ut actus*) insofar as it is contracted by human nature, but not insofar as the nature of being (*natura essendi*) is present.[302] Contat proposes that, in the infusion of grace, the mediation of being (*esse*) consists in being loosened from the determination which comes from created nature by a free and loving decision of divine providence. This opening-up does not intensify being (*esse*) in itself in the sense that it would change the determination that the essence confers upon it: the act of being of a human being remains that of a human being. However, it does intensify the active power of being (*virtus essendi*) in the sense that it allows it to activate in the soul an effect which relates to being itself (*ipsum esse*). By mediating grace, the act of being communicates to man an effect which transcends the nature of man, but not that of being (*esse*) as such.[303] In this way, Contat's solution differs from that of Sánchez Sorondo, since it avoids the risk of making being of grace (*esse gratiae*) extraneous to the act of being (according to a *resolutio secundum rationem*). It also differs from that of Ocáriz, because the intensification does not intensify being as act (*esse ut actus*) in terms of its specific degree of intensity, but refers to the power (*virtus*) of being, which can be elevated to the level of being itself (*ipsum esse*) to communicate a participated divine being (*esse divinum*).[304]

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[301] A. CONTAT, "Réflexions sur l'ontologie...," p. 182.
[302] A. CONTAT, "Réflexions sur l'ontologie...," p. 183.
[303] A. CONTAT, "Réflexions sur l'ontologie...," p. 183.
[304] A. CONTAT, "Réflexions sur l'ontologie...," pp. 183-184.

9. Summary

Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo invites us to not employ the Scholastic distinction between virtual participation and formal participation when dealing with grace and to attend more to the conferral grace as the conferral of divine being (*esse divinum*). He traces the Scholastic deviation from Aquinas's thought and connects the introduction of the distinction between formal and virtual participation to the forgetfulness of "intensive *esse*." Even though his dissertation is entirely dedicated to grace as a participation in divine nature, he does not really pursue Fabro's idea that this supernatural participation is configured as an *attingere Deum per operationem*. Alain Contat points out that Sánchez Sorondo's theory lacks a resolution *secundum rationem* of *esse gratiae* to *esse ut actus*.

For his part, Fernando Ocáriz holds that *esse gratiae* is an *esse in actu* and raises the question of the novelty of participation in *esse divinum* and articulates this as a renewal of *actus essendi* insofar as there is a change in the relation to God: without grace, the being of the creature relates to God insofar as it causally proceeds from God; with grace, the being of the justified spiritual creature is introduced into the life of the Trinity and relates to God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. After considering Ocáriz's theory, Contat holds that it is better to posit an intensification of the *virtus* of *esse ut actus*. It is also unfortunate that Ocáriz has recourse to the Scholastic notion of "obediential potency" in his exploration in an attempt to preserve the utter gratuitousness of grace and glory.

Just as Sánchez Sorondo shows that Scholasticism deviated from Aquinas's notion of participation, Denis Bradley convincingly shows how the Scholastic commentators deviated from Aquinas's position on the natural desire to see God and introduced and applied distinctions and notions that obfuscated Aquinas's thought. Bradley, though, does not undertake a chronological overview to show how Aquinas's thought developed and how mature texts can be used to re-evaluate youthful texts in the *Scriptum* and even *De ueritate*. As well, Bradley does not delve deeply into the nuanced interplay between intellect and will in relation to the natural desire to see God.

In his work, Steven Long tries to defend the Scholastic notions of "obediential potency," "naturally elicited desire," the role of the hypothesis of "pure nature," and "physical premotion." He modifies the

Scholastic notion of obediential potency to mean not "mere non-repugnance" but the presence of a potency, characteristic of this economic order of providence, that cannot be actuated by a connatural agent. His reading of Aquinas relies heavily on the theological hypothesis of another economic order of providence in which the rational creature is not ordered to supernatural beatitude.

Feingold attempts to re-read all of Aquinas's texts on the natural desire to see God, especially those from the *Summa contra Gentiles*, as an elicited natural desire that follows not upon our nature, but upon knowledge of God's existence. Because Feingold demands that every natural inclination be sufficient to attain its object, he is unable to accept that our natural desire for and natural inclination to the vision of God is *insufficient* without the help of grace and the theological virtues. Because he denies a natural and insufficient inclination, Feingold has recourse to the notion of "specific obediential potency," a notion invented and proposed by neo-scholastics.

For her part, Daria Spezzano presents Aquinas's mature, dynamic view of grace in the *Summa theologiae* and especially brings to the forefront Aquinas's thought on our supernatural participation in the divine processions of Word and Love. The dynamic perspective in her work, I believe, can guide a deeper understanding of the notion of supernatural participation as "*attingere per operationem*."

Jacob Wood traces the development of Aquinas's thought in relation to his contemporaries, but, in the end, employs the notion of obediential potency, albeit in a way different from Cajetan, to characterize our passive (material) potency to the beatific vision. Rather than try to mediate somehow between Henri de Lubac and the Scholastic tradition with regard to the natural desire to see God, I propose to follow the nuanced insights of Alain Contat, who textual resolves the debated points, and those of Denis Bradley, who brings to light the deviation of the Scholastic commentator tradition from Aquinas's thought on the metaphysics of grace.

Alain Contat argues that in Aquinas's mature thought a desire is characterized as "without the consideration of the possibility or impossibility"[305] of attaining the desired good object. While Wood interprets

[305] THOMAS AQUINAS, *De spe*, a. 1: "Secundo, quia desiderium est alicuius boni absolute, absque consideratione possibilitatis et impossibilitatis illius."

Aquinas as holding that there is a natural, passive appetite for beatitude and that the natural desire for the vision of God is elicited and consequent upon knowledge of God's existence, Contat holds that from the *Summa contra Gentiles* onward, Aquinas distinguishes between a natural *desire* for the beatific vision and the *appetite* for that vision. Contat invites us to be attentive not only to the development of Aquinas's thought but also to the interplay of the intellect and will in his mature thought and to distinguish in what sense the will *formally* has a natural desire to see God insofar as it naturally desires that the intellect attain its perfection and in what sense the natural desire of the intellect to see God is the foundation for the natural desire (elicited act) of the will. Contat also recently offered an alternative to the Scholastic view of the participation proper to grace. After contrasting and criticizing the four views of Ambroise Gardiel, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, Sánchez Sorondo, and Fernando Ocáriz, Contat pursues a solution along Fabrian lines and posits the gratuitous gift of *esse gratiae* as an intensification of the *virtus* of *esse ut actus*, which remains *fixum et quietum* in the justified spiritual creature.